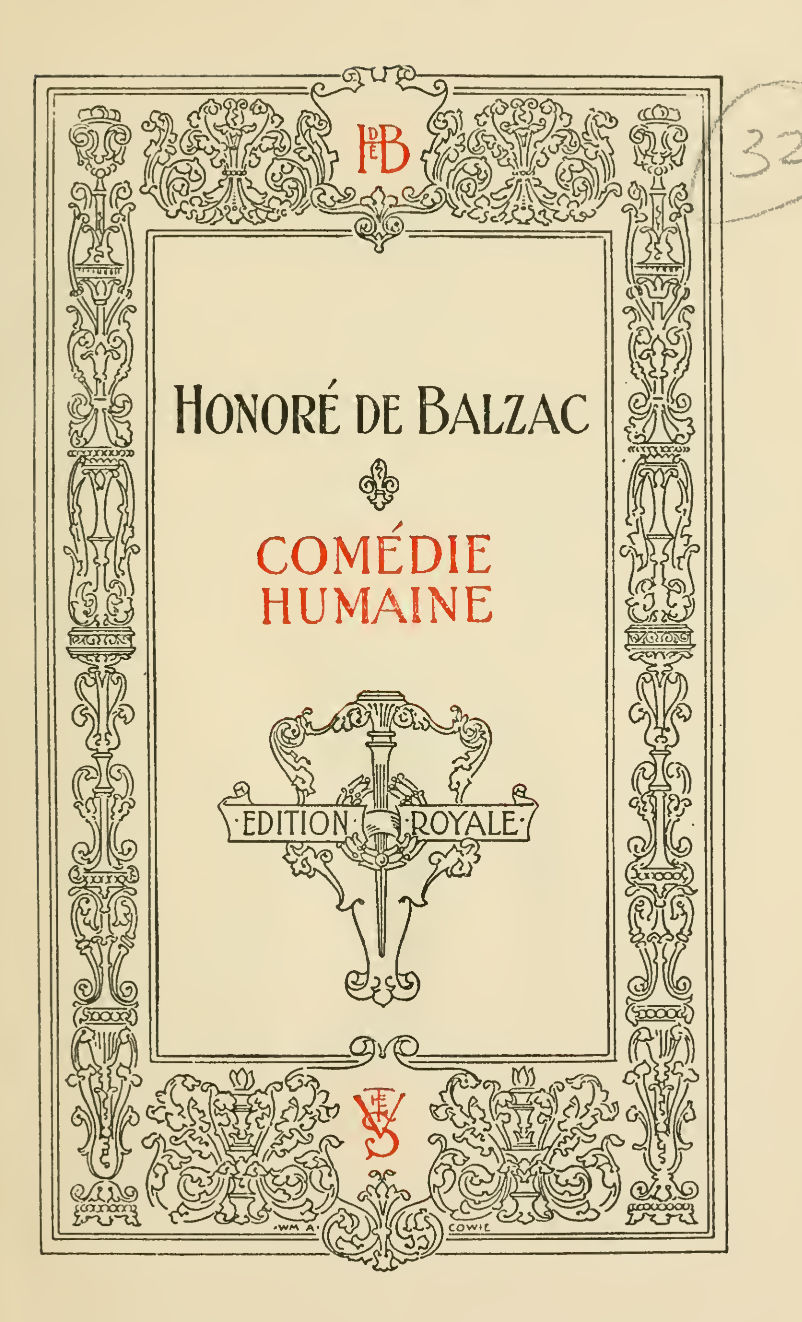
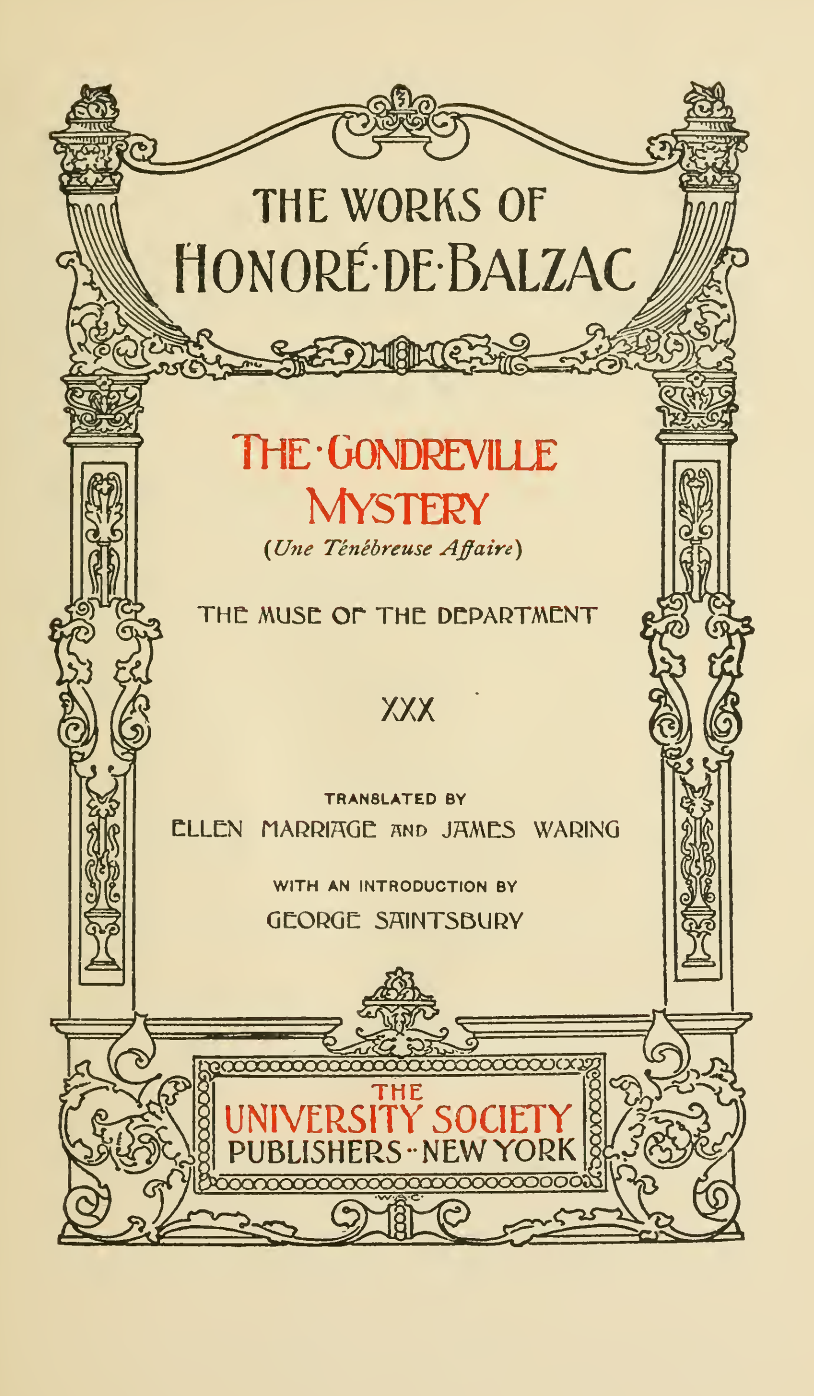

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HONORÉ DE BALZAC
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THE WORKS OF HONORÉ·DE·BALZAC

THE · GONDREVILLE MYSTERY

(*Une Ténébreuse Affaire*)

THE MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT

XXX

TRANSLATED BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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THE
UNIVERSITY SOCIETY
PUBLISHERS · NEW YORK

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INTRODUCTION

While I was engaged in preparing these Introductions, I saw in an English newspaper, of some literary as well as other repute, remarks on Balzac as compared with some writers of crime and detective stories in the present day. According to a habit which alternates with the other habit of reverencing predecessors exaggeratedly, the reviewer spoke with the utmost contempt of Balzac's work, and opined that contemporary English practitioners of the art had made progress in it, justifying something like John P. Robinson's contempt for the persons "down in Judee." It is fair to say that what these remarks were immediately based upon was not *Une Ténébreuse Affaire,* but *Ferragus,* which is a much cruder specimen of the author's power. But, still, I am inclined to think that this generous, and probably young, partisan of the present was a little hard on the poor old past. In the first place, it is something to be the original and not the copy; and it is certain as anything in history that Balzac begat Poe, and that Poe begat all our English crime-novelists. To raise the flower when the seed can be bought at any shop round the corner is, as Lord Tennyson once remarked, not an extraordinarily difficult affair; to which it may be added that to raise ever bigger and brighter-colored flowers by ingenious crossing and some pains is also not beyond the reach of intolerably limited powers. It is very different to make the first cross, to fish the murex up, if I may shift the comparison and the quotation.

Perhaps, too, it is a little hasty to make so sure that things have actually improved. I speak on this point with diffidence, having no very special love for any of these detective stories

as such. But I think you may be too ingenious and recondite in a detective story as well as elsewhere, and that the picture is not always the best where the painter has taken the most elaborate pains.

However this may be, he must, I think, be a difficult person to please who is not pleased with *Une Ténébreuse Affaire,* the only blot on which seems to me to be the early conduct of Michu, which was rather calculated to attract than to avert suspicion. Otherwise the games and counter-games in which Corentin figures justify that personage's reputation much better than *Les Chouans* (where his part is practically played for him by others), and rank with the most ingenious exercises of the kind. In this story, moreover, while he had attained greater technical skill than in *Les Chouans,* Balzac still retained enough of his old romantic enthusiasm to insert a strong element of nobility and pathos into the story, by means of the devotion of Michu and the heroism of Laurence. His admixture of reasons of state may be regarded with different feelings by different persons, and Marsay's key to the whole business may or may not seem superfluous. But it must be remembered that in Balzac's time the opinion which Miss Martha Buskbody so uncompromisingly expressed at the end of *Old Mortality*—the opinion that the author ought to account for everything and mention, at least summarily, the ultimate fate of everybody—was still very largely held by readers, and not discountenanced by critics. Moreover, the practice gave Balzac an opportunity of keying the story on to that fantastic society of wits, statesmen, dandies, and great ladies which he so fondly cherished, and which had such an influence on his time, that, as Sainte-Beuve, no friendly witness, tells us, a Venetian coterie actually adopted it as a model, and played out the parts of the Marsays and the Maufrigneuses with all gravity in real life.

We may, however, leave the wiles of Corentin and Peyrade,

the evidence of the crusts and the bottle-wax, the extremely ingenious confusion between the two imprisonments and the rest of the cat-and-mouse business, to those who appreciate it, with nothing more than a repetition of the remark that Balzac, if not the absolute inventor (for nobody ever is the absolute inventor of anything), was the first really great novelist to devote himself to matter of this kind. There will always be a sufficiency of good wits to hold that he has not been surpassed, to say no more, by any other novelist, great or small, since, especially in the little fishing or feeling passage-of-arms between Corentin and the curé. And we may leave to other tastes the romantic interest of the actual story.

Une Ténébreuse Affaire appeared with chapter divisions in the newspaper *Le Commerce* during January and February 1841, and was published by Souverain as a book in 1843. It was placed in the *Comédie* three years later.

Although *La Muse du Département* is an important work, it cannot be spoken of in quite unhesitating terms. It contains, indeed, in the personage of Lousteau, one of the very most elaborate of Balzac's portraits of a particular type of men of letters. The original is said to have been Jules Janin, who is somewhat disadvantageously contrasted here and elsewhere with Claude Vignon, said on the same rather vague authority to be Gustave Planche. Both Janin and Planche are now too much forgotten, but in both more or less (and in Lousteau very much "more") Balzac cannot be said to have dealt mildly with his *bête noire,* the critical temperament. Lousteau, indeed, though not precisely a scoundrel, is both a rascal and a cad. Even Balzac seems a little shocked at his *lettre de faire part* in reference to his mistress' child; and it is seldom possible to discern in any of his proceedings the

most remote approximation to the conduct of a gentleman. But then, as we have seen, and shall see, Balzac's standard for the conduct of his actual gentlemen was by no means fantastically exquisite or discouragingly high, and in the case of his Bohemians it was accommodating to the utmost degree. He seems to despise Lousteau, but rather for his insouciance and neglect of his opportunities of making himself a position than for anything else.

I have often felt disposed to ask those who would assert Balzac's absolute infallibility as a gynæcologist to give me a reasoned criticism of the heroine of this novel. I do not entirely "figure to myself" Dinah de la Baudraye. It is perfectly possible that she should have loved a "sweep" like Lousteau; there is certainly nothing extremely unusual in a woman loving worse sweeps even than he. But would she have done it, and having done it, have also done what she did afterwards? These questions may be answered differently; I do not answer them in the negative myself, but I cannot give them an affirmative answer with the conviction which I should like to show.

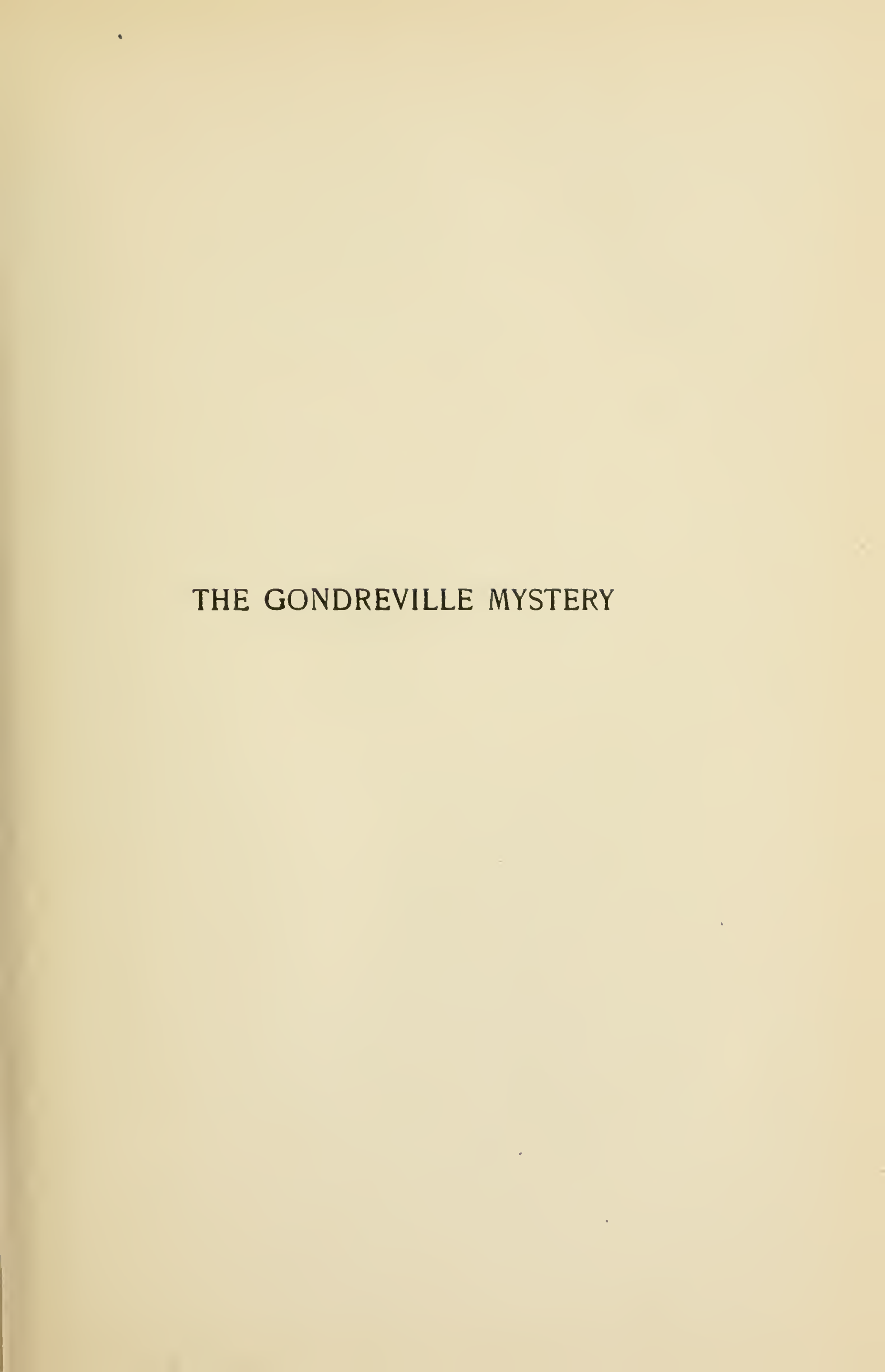
Among the minor characters, the *substitut* de Clagny has a touch of nobility which contrasts happily enough with Lousteau's unworthiness. Bianchon is as good as usual: Balzac always gives Bianchon a favorable part. Madame Piédefer is one of the numerous instances in which the unfortunate class of mothers-in-law atones for what are supposed to be its crimes against the human race; and old La Baudraye, not so hopelessly repulsive in a French as he would be in an English novel, is a shrewd old rascal enough.

But I cannot think the scene of the Parisians *blaguing* the Sancerrois a very happy one. That it is in exceedingly bad taste might not matter so very much; Balzac would reply, and justly, that he had not intended to represent it as anything else. That the fun is not very funny may be a matter of defi-

nition and appreciation. But what scarcely admits of denial or discussion is that it is tyrannously too long. The citations of *Olympia* are pushed beyond measure, beyond what is comic, almost beyond the license of farce; and the comments, which remind one rather of the heavy jesting on critics in *Un Prince de la Bohème* and the short-lived *Revue Parisienne,* are labored to the last degree. The part of Nathan, too, is difficult to appreciate exactly, and altogether the book does not seem to me a *réussite.*

La Muse du Département has a rather more complicated record than its companion piece in *Les Parisiens en Province, L'Illustre Gaudissart.* It appeared at first, not quite complete and under the title of *Dinah Piédefer,* in *Le Messager* during March and April 1843, and was almost immediately published as a book, with works of other writers, under the general title of *Les Mystères de Province,* and accompanied by some other work of its own author's. It had four parts and fifty-two chapters in *Le Messager,* an arrangement which was but slightly altered in the volume form. M. de Lovenjoul gives some curious indications of mosaic work in it, and some fragments which do not now appear in the text.

G. S.



THE GONDREVILLE MYSTERY

THE GONDREVILLE MYSTERY

To Monsieur de Margone, from his grateful guest at Château de Saché, de Balzac.

I.

THE TRIALS OF THE POLICE

THE autumn of the year 1803 was one of the finest during the Empire Period, as we call the earliest years of the nineteenth century. Rain had fallen in October; the fields were refreshed; and the green leaves were still on the trees in mid-November. Wherefore people were beginning to believe in a covenant between heaven and Bonaparte, then recently declared Consul for life. This belief was one among many to which he owed his magical influence; and (strange coincidence!) when the sun failed him in 1812, his prosperity came to an end.

Towards four o'clock in the afternoon on the fifteenth of November 1803 the sunlight fell like a crimson dust over the crests of two double rows of ancient elms in a long and lordly avenue—and lighted up the sand and the bents of grass about one of those vast circular spaces which you may see near country seats; for land in former times was worth so little that it could be sacrificed to ornament. The air was so pure, the evening so mild, that the family from the lodge were sitting out of doors as if it were summer-time. A man in a green canvas shooting-coat with green buttons, breeches of the same material, linen gaiters reaching to the knees, and thin-soled walking-shoes, was busy cleaning a rifle with that punctilious care which a skilled sportsman bestows on his weapon in leisure moments. This man, however, had neither

pouch nor game-bag, nor any of a sportsman's accoutrements, and an ill-disguised dread seemed to weigh upon the minds of the two women who sat watching him. Indeed, if any one else had been looking on at this scene from behind one of the bushes, he must have shuddered with the man's wife and the old mother-in-law. Clearly, no sportsman takes such minute pains for a day's shooting; nor, in the department of the Aube, does he carry a heavy rifle.

"Are you going buck-shooting, Michu?" asked his pretty young wife, forcing a smile.

Michu did not answer her at once. He turned his attention to the dog that was lying out in the sunshine with his muzzle on his outstretched paws, in the charming attitude peculiar to sporting dogs. This animal had raised his head and was snuffing the wind, first in the direction of the avenue that stretched away for more than half a mile, and then again towards a cross-road which came out to the left of the great circle.

"No," said Michu, at length. "It is a monster that I do not mean to miss; it is a lynx."

The dog, a very handsome brown and white spaniel, began to growl.

"Good," muttered Michu. "Spies! The country swarms with them."

Madame Michu, a beautiful fair-haired, blue-eyed woman, with a grave, thoughtful face and a form moulded like an antique statue, raised her eyes sorrowfully to the sky. Some dark and bitter trouble seemed to weigh upon her. The man's looks to some extent justified the woman's fears. The laws of physiognomy are exact not merely in their application to character, but also in forecasting the future. Some faces are prophetic. If it were possible to obtain faithful portraits of all who die upon the scaffold (and these statistics from the life are of importance to society), the science of Gall and Lavater would prove incontestably that there were strange tokens on all of those faces, even among the guiltless. Yes, Fate sets a mark on the countenances of those

that are destined to die a violent death; and that seal was visible for experienced eyes on the expressive face of the man with the rifle.

Michu was short and stout; and jerky and nimble in his movements as a monkey. He was a man of quiet temper, but his countenance of the squat Kalmuck type, his white skin streaked with tiny distended blood vessels, and red crisp hair, gave him a sinister look. His eyes were like a tiger's, tawny and clear; you might gaze down into their uttermost depths, they neither kindled nor moved. Steady, bright, unblenching, they grew intolerable at last. The continual contrast between the man's quick alertness and the unchanging eyes added to the glacial impression which Michu made upon you at first sight. Here was a man prompt to act, a man whose whole power of action was controlled by one fixed idea; even as in animals the creature's life is entirely subordinated to unreflecting instinct.

Since 1793 Michu had worn a fan-shaped beard, a peculiarity which would have lent a formidable look to his face even if he had not been the president of a Jacobin club during the Terror. The flat-nosed Socratic visage was crowned by a noble forehead, so curved, however, that it seemed to overhang the face beneath it; the well-set ears seemed ready to move like the ears of a wild animal and always on the alert. The mouth was always open (a habit common enough among countrymen), so that you could catch a glimpse of strong teeth, white as almonds, but irregular. Thick glossy whiskers framed the pale face with its purpled patches; while the tawny red of the hair, cropped close in front, but left to grow at the sides and back of the head, did their part to perfection in bringing out all the strangeness, all the signs of fate, in the man's appearance. His short thick neck seemed to tempt the hatchet of the law.

At this moment the slanting shafts of sunlight fell full upon the faces of the three people at whom the dog looked up in turn; and the theatre in which the scene was enacted was, moreover, a most noble one.

The circular space lay at the furthest extremity of the park of Gondreville, one of the finest estates in France and unquestionably the finest in the department of the Aube, with its château built from Mansard's designs, its magnificent avenues of elm trees, its fifteen hundred acres of park enclosed with walls, its nine large farms, its forest, mills, and meadows. Before the Revolution this almost princely domain belonged to the Simeuse family. Ximeuse is a fief in Lorraine. The name is pronounced *Simeuse,* and in the end the spelling followed the pronunciation.

The great fortune of the Simeuses, a noble family attached to the House of Burgundy, dated back to the times when the Guises overshadowed the Valois. Afterwards, neither Richelieu nor Louis XIV. forgot their devotion to the factious House of Lorraine, and the Simeuses were out of favor at court. So the marquis of that day—an old Burgundian, an old Guisard, Leaguer, and Frondeur, heir to the four great grudges which the noblesse bare the crown—came to live at Cinq-Cygne, a courtier driven from the court of the Louvre. He had married the widow of the Comte de Cinq-Cygne, the younger branch of the great House of Chargebœuf, one of the most illustrious families of Champagne; though the Cinq-Cygnes were wealthier than the elder line and at least as famous.

And so it came to pass that the Marquis de Simeuse, one of the richest nobles of the age, built Gondreville instead of ruining himself at court, and rounded out the estate with broad lands simply to add to his great game preserves. It was he who built the Hôtel de Simeuse, near the Hôtel de Cinq-Cygne at Troyes (the two old mansions and the bishop's palace were the only stone buildings in the city for a long while), and it was he, likewise, who sold Ximeuse to the Duke of Lorraine.

His son wasted his father's savings and even broke into his fine fortune during the reign of Louis XV., but he entered the navy, became a commodore and a vice-admiral, and redeemed his youthful follies by splendid services to the state.

The Admiral's eldest son, the Marquis de Simeuse, died on the scaffold at Troyes during the Revolution, leaving twin sons who at that moment were following the fortunes of the House of Condé as *émigrés.*

The great circular space was the place where the hunt met in the time of the Great Marquis (for so the builder of Gondreville was called in the family), and a hunting lodge had been built within the park walls in the time of Louis XIV. It was here in the Cinq-Cygne lodge, as it was called, that Michu had lived since 1789. The village of Cinq-Cygne lay on the edge of the Forest of Nodesme (a corruption of *Notre Dame*), and the way to the village was through the double avenue of elm trees, the quarter in which Couraut got wind of spies. The lodge had fallen completely into disuse since the time of the Great Marquis, the Admiral knew more of the court or the high seas than of his lands in Champagne, and his son, the late Marquis, had made over the dilapidated house to Michu for a dwelling.

It was a noble brick building with reticulated corner-stones and facings. A handsome but rust-eaten wrought-iron gateway on either side abbutted upon a broad deep haha with great trees springing up on its sides, and parapets bristling with iron scrollwork, which confronted intruders with a formidable array of spikes.

The park walls only began beyond the circumference of the circle. The imposing half-moon without was enclosed by a bank with elm trees growing upon it; the corresponding inner half being outlined by clumps of foreign trees. So the hunting lodge stood exactly in the centre of the space traced out by the two horseshoes.

Michu used the great rooms on the ground floor as stable, cow-shed, and kitchen. Nothing of all the ancient splendor of the place was left save the hall paved with marble, white and black, which you entered from the side of the park, by one of those glass doors with little square panes, which you used to see at Versailles before Louis Philippe turned that palace into a hospital for the departed "glories of France."

Within, the lodge was divided in two by a wooden staircase, old-fashioned and worm-eaten, but not wanting in character. There were five somewhat low rooms on the first floor, and a vast garret up above in the roof, for the venerable edifice was crowned by a four-sided roof, terminating in a ridge with a leaden finial at either end by way of ornament.

Michu stored his fodder in this garret, which was lighted by four bull's-eye windows of the kind affected, and not without reason, by Mansard; for the flat Italian roof and low attic story is an absurdity against which our French climate protests.

The park about the old hunting-lodge was planned out in the English fashion. A lake, or rather a sheet of water that once had been a lake and was now a mere pond, well stocked with fish, manifested its presence by a film of mist that hung above the tree-tops, and, no less, by the croaking of hundreds of frogs and sounds made by noisy amphibious creatures after sunset. The pervading sense of crumbling age and decay, the deep silence in the woods, the avenue stretching away into the distance, the far-off forest, the rust-eaten ironwork, the massive stones clad in velvet moss, —these and a thousand little things combined to lend an idyllic grace to a building which remains to this day.

At the time of the opening of this story, Michu was leaning against the moss-covered parapet. His powder-flask, cap, and handkerchief were lying on the wall beside him, together with a screwdriver, some bits of rag and odd tools required for his suspicious operations. His wife was sitting just outside the lodge, almost under the doorway where the richly-carved armorial bearings of the Simeuse family and their noble motto *Si meurs!* still remained intact; and her mother, dressed like a peasant woman, had put her chair just in front, so that Madame Michu's feet might rest on the rungs and not on the damp ground.

"Is the boy here?" Michu asked of his wife.

"He is roaming somewhere about the pond," said the mother; "he is crazy over frogs and insects."

Michu gave an alarming whistle, and his son came running up at once. Evidently the bailiff at Gondreville was master in his own house, and since 1789, and still more since 1793, he had done pretty much as he liked on the estate. His wife and her mother, a young lad named Gaucher, and Marianne, the servant girl, were all afraid of him, and so was everybody else for a score of miles around. The causes of this feeling of teror should perhaps be given without further delay, for in this way Michu's portrait will be completed by a sketch of his character.

The old Marquis de Simeuse had parted with most of his property in 1790; but events moved too quickly for him; he had not time to put the great Gondreville estate in trustworthy hands. Accused of corresponding with the Duke of Brunswick and the Prince of Coburg, the Marquise de Simeuse and his wife were imprisoned and condemned to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal of Troyes, under the presidency of Madame Michu's father. The great estate was therefore sold by the nation. People noticed at the time, with something like a thrill of horror, that the old Marquis' head gamekeeper, the president of the Arcis Jacobin club, had come to Troyes to be present at the execution. Michu was an orphan, and the son of a simple peasant. The Marquise had loaded him with kindnesses; she had taken him as a child into the château and had given him the head keeper's place. Lofty patriotism regarded Michu as a second Brutus; but no one in the countryside would recognize him after that piece of flagrant ingratitude.

The buyer of the estate was a man from Arcis, one Marion, whose grandfather had been land steward to the Simeuses. This Marion, a barrister before and after the Revolution, was afraid of the keeper, and employed him as bailiff with a salary of three thousand livres and a commission on the sales of timber. Michu was supposed to have some ten thousand francs of his own already, when, with his reputation for patriotism to recommend him, he married the daughter of a tanner at

Troyes. His father-in-law was the apostle of Revolution in the town and the president of the Revolutionary Tribunal. A man of convictions, not unlike Saint-Just in character, he was mixed up afterwards in the Babeuf conspiracy and committed suicide to escape trial. Marthe, his daughter, was the prettiest girl in Troyes, and therefore she had been obliged by her formidable parent to personate the Goddess of Liberty on a Republican high day.

Marion, the proprietor of Gondreville, scarcely came to the place three times in seven years. His grandfather had been the Simeuses' land-steward; and all Arcis believed at the time that Citizen Marion really represented the Marquis' two sons. As for the bailiff of Gondreville, as a devoted patriot and the son-in-law of the president of the Revolutionary Tribunal at Troyes, he was greatly in favor with Malin, one of the representatives of the department of the Aube, and people treated him with a certain respect so long as the Terror lasted. But after the decline of the Mountain and the tanner's suicide, Michu became the scapegoat of his party. All the blame of many violent deeds was thrown upon the dead man and his son-in-law, though in truth the latter had neither art nor part in them. Then the bailiff of Gondreville stood up for himself and assumed a hostile attitude in the face of the crowd that did him this injustice. He showed a bold front in words. But the 18th Brumaire came and went, and Michu relapsed into a profound silence, the philosophy of the strong. He made no more protest against public opinion, he was satisfied to act; this prudence gained him a reputation for sly cunning, for he possessed about a hundred thousand francs in land. Michu's money had been made in perfectly legitimate ways. His salary and commission amounted to six thousand francs per annum, and he had inherited his wife's father's property. But though he had been bailiff of Gondreville for a dozen years, and anybody who chose to do so could calculate the amount of his savings, the old outcry against the Jacobin was raised again when he bought a farm worth fifty thousand francs towards the close

of the Consulate. At Arcis people said that Michu meant to redeem his character by making a lot of money. And, unluckily, just as this affair was dying out of people's memories, a trifling incident set rancorous tongues gossiping in the countryside, and revived the general belief in the ferocity of the bailiff's character.

Coming home one evening from Troyes in the company of several peasants, Michu chanced to drop a paper on the high-road. The tenant of Cinq-Cygne, who knew how to read, was walking behind the rest. He stooped and picked it up. Michu turned, and saw the farmer with the paper in his hands. In a moment he drew his pistol from his belt, cocked the weapon, and threatened to blow the man's brains out if he read a word of the paper. It all happened so suddenly, Michu's behavior was so violent, the tone of his voice so awful, and his eyes glared so fiercely, that the men all felt a cold chill of terror. Naturally Michu made an enemy of the tenant of Cinq-Cygne.

Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, the Simeuses' cousin, had but the one farm for her fortune. She lived at the château of Cinq-Cygne; and her whole life was devoted to the twin cousins, her playmates as a child at Troyes and Gondreville. Her only brother, Julian de Cinq-Cygne, left France earlier than the Simeuses, and had fallen before Mayence; but the house of Cinq-Cygne possessed a sufficiently rare privilege of which more must be said by-and-by, the heiress of the house transmitted the title in default of heirs male. This affair between Michu and the tenant caused a terrific hubbub in the countryside and darkened the gloomy mystery that hung about Michu; nor was this the only circumstance which gained him a formidable name.

A few months went by, and Citizen Marion came to Gondreville. He brought with him Citizen Malin. Political events had turned out so well for Malin and Arcis that the First Consul had given him a seat at the Council of State as a reward for his services on the 18th Brumaire. Marion had sold the estate to Malin (so rumor ran), and politicians

in the little town of Arcis now discovered that Marion had been Malin's stalking-horse all along and not a cover for the MM. Simeuse. The all-powerful Councillor of State was the great man of Arcis. He had sent one of his political allies to the prefecture at Troyes; he had exempted the son of one of the Gondreville tenants, one Beauvisage, from military service; he was everybody's friend. Consequently, there was no one to say a word against the bargain in the whole countryside, where Malin reigned and still reigns supreme.

It was just in the dawn of the Empire. People who read about the French Revolution to-day in history books will never have any idea of the immense distances traveled by public opinion between the events that come so thickly together. The need of peace and quiet after violent commotion was so generally felt that the most serious matters were forgotten in a very short time. Events were ripened continually by new and burning interests and soon became ancient history. So nobody except Michu looked curiously into the past; and the bargain seemed perfectly simple to other eyes. Marion had bought Gondreville for six hundred thousand francs in *assignats,* he sold it for a million in current coin; but Malin paid nothing out of his pocket except the fees for the registration of title. Grévin, an old comrade of Malin's in the days when both were ecclesiastics, naturally favored this piece of jobbery. He had his reward. The Councillor of State made him a notary at Arcis.

When the new owner came to the lodge, brought thither by the tenant of Grouage (the farm that lay to the left of the great avenue, between the park and the forest), Michu's face grew white; he left the house. He went off in search of Marion, whom he found at last alone in one of the broad walks in the park.

"Are you selling Gondreville, sir?"

"Yes, Michu, yes. You will have an influential master. The Councillor is one of the First Consul's friends, and very well acquainted with all the Ministry. He will do well by you."

"Then were you keeping the place for *him* all along?"

"I do not say that," replied Marion. "I did not know how to invest the money at the time, and I thought I should be safe if I put it into the National lands; but I do not care about keeping a place that belonged to the family, when my father was——"

"A servant in their house, their steward!" Michu interrupted fiercely. "But you are not going to sell the place; I want it, and I can pay you for it, myself——"

"*You?*"

"Yes, I. I mean it! eight hundred thousand francs and in good gold——"

"Eight hundred thousand francs! Where did you get them?" asked Marion.

"That is no affair of yours," returned Michu. Then in a milder tone and lowered voice he added, "My wife's father saved a good many livres."

"You are too late, Michu. The thing is done now."

"You can put it off, sir!" exclaimed the bailiff, and catching at his employer's hand he held it in a vise-like grip. "People hate me; I want to be rich and powerful; I must have Gondreville! and I don't care a straw for my life, mind you; so sell the land to me or I will blow your brains out!"

"But anyhow I must have time to back out of it with Malin, and he is not of an accommodating turn——"

"I will give you twenty-four hours. If you say a word about this, I shall think no more of cutting off your head than of slithering a turnip."

Marion and Malin left the château that night. Marion was frightened; he told the Councillor about his interview and advised him to keep an eye on the bailiff. It was too late to go back on the bargain; Marion was obliged to make over the estate to the man who had actually paid for it; and it seemed to him that Michu was not the man to understand or admit such a reason. Moreover, it was understood that this service rendered to Malin was to lay the foundation of a political fortune for Marion and his brother. And so it proved. In 1806

Advocate Marion became president of an Imperial court through Malin's influence, and afterwards, when receivers-general were instituted, Marion's brother was appointed to the department of the Aube. Malin recommended Marion to remove to Paris, and spoke to the Minister of Police, who put a special guard over the threatened man. But Michu was still bailiff of the Gondreville estate, under the ferule of the Arcis notary; Malin did not wish to drive him to extremities, or perhaps he thought that he could the better keep a watch on him.

From this time forth Michu grew more and more thoughtful and taciturn; and people looked upon him as a man capable of ugly deeds. A Councillor of State under the First Consul was as powerful as a Minister. Malin played a great part in Paris. He was one of the commissioners employed upon the Code. He bought one of the finest mansions in the Faubourg Saint Germain after his marriage with the daughter of a rich contractor named Sibuelle, who had fallen into disgrace. After receivers-general were instituted, this worthy was associated with Marion's brother in the department of the Aube. So Malin only once came back to Gondreville; he left Grévin to look after his interests there.

After all, what had he, the sometime representative of the Aube, to fear from an ex-president of the Arcis Jacobin club? Yet, the townspeople not unnaturally shared the peasants' bad opinion of Michu; and Marion, Malin, and Grévin, without committing themselves, took it for granted that he was an extremely dangerous character. Nor did the action of the authorities, who had orders from headquarters to keep the bailiff under police surpervision, tend to destroy this opinion. People began to wonder how it was that Michu kept his place, and finally decided that the master was too much afraid of his bailiff to turn him out. After this who can fail to understand the meaning of the deep melancholy of Marthe's expression?

Marthe had been piously brought up from the first by her mother. Both women were good Catholics. The tanner's

opinions and conduct had given them pain. The red color came into Marthe's face whenever she thought of the day when she was dressed as a goddess and paraded about the city of Troyes. Her father forced her to marry Michu; she was too much afraid of her husband to judge him, but his bad reputation grew worse. And yet she felt that he loved her; in the depths of her woman's heart there was a very true and real affection for the terrible revolutionary. She had never seen him do anything that was not right; he never spoke a rough word to her, at any rate; nay, he tried to guess her every wish. He was almost always out of the house, for he thought, poor pariah, that his presence was disagreeable to her. Marthe and Michu, mutually distrustful, might be said to live in an armed neutrality, to use the modern phrase.

For seven years people had pointed the finger at her as the executioner's daughter and the wife of a husband branded as a traitor. Marthe felt it keenly. Beauvisage, the tenant of Bellache, the farm in the plain to the right of the avenue, used to come past the lodge, and often she had heard the man say:

"That is Judas' house!"

Beauvisage was attached to the Simeuses.

The bailiff seemed to have done his best to complete the extraordinary resemblance to the thirteenth apostle, to which, in fact, he owed the horrible nickname given to him all over the countryside. And it was this trouble, and certain vague but ever-present forebodings that made Marthe look grave and thoughtful. Nothing brings more deep dejection than the sense of undeserved and hopeless degradation. A painter surely might have made a great picture of this little group of pariahs, in one of the loveliest spots in that Champagne country, where the landscape is usually so dreary.

"François!" shouted the bailiff to hasten the boy's speed.

François Michu, a child of ten, was free of the park and forest where he levied his little tithe, ate the fruit, went a-hunting, and knew no trouble nor care. He was the one happy creature in a household cut off from the rest of the

world by the forest and the park; and no less cut off from their kind by a feeling of repulsion in which every one shared.

"Just pick up these things," said Michu, pointing to the parapet, "and put this away. Look me in the face! You ought to love your father and mother, eh?"

For answer the child jumped up to kiss his father, but Michu turned to take up the rifle and pushed him away.

"Good! You have blabbed sometimes about things that are done here," he continued, fixing two eyes, formidable as a wildcat's, upon the child. "Now mind this; if you tell tales of the smallest thing that happens here to Gaucher or to the folk at Bellache or Grouage, or even to Marianne that is so fond of us, you will be the death of your father. Don't let this happen again, and I will forgive you for yesterday's prattle."

The little one began to cry.

"Don't cry; but if anybody asks you any questions, say 'I don't know,' as the peasants do. There are people prowling about the country, and I don't like the looks of them. There! You understood, didn't you?" added Michu, turning to the women. "So keep still tongues in your head."

"What are you going to do, dear?"

Michu was carefully measuring a charge of powder and loading his rifle. He laid the weapon down on the parapet and said to Marthe, "Nobody knows that I have this rifle; come, and stand here in front!"

Couraut got up, barking furiously.

"That's a good sharp dog!" exclaimed Michu; "there are spies about, I am certain——"

The presence of a spy can always be felt. Couraut and Michu seemed to have but one and the same life; they lived like an Arab and his horse in the desert. Michu knew the meaning of every sound that Couraut made, as well as the dog could read the expression of his master's face and knew his thoughts by instinct.

"What do you say to that?" Michu exclaimed in a whisper,

as two suspicious-looking persons appeared in a side walk, and came towards them.

"What is going on hereabouts? They are from Paris," said the old mother.

"Aha! That's the way," said Michu. "Just hide my rifle," he added, in his wife's ear. "They are coming towards us."

The two men from Paris, now crossing the graveled space, might have served as types for a painter. The one, and seemingly the inferior, wore high boots with tops turned down rather lower than usual to afford a view of a pair of roguish calves covered with striped silk stockings of dubious cleanliness. His ribbed, apricot-colored breeches fastened with metal buttons were a trifle too ample, and comfortably slack about his person, and it was evident from the position of the worn creases that he was a man of sedentary habits. A quilted waistcoat, loaded with embroidery and fastened by one button only across the chest, contributed to a general air of slovenliness that was further increased by the black corkscrew curls which hid his forehead and hung about his cheeks. A blue and white cameo pin adorned his shirt front, and a double line of steel watch-chain hung below his waist. His cinnamon-brown coat would have caught the eye of a caricaturist at once, for the long tail behind exactly resembled the codfish from which the garment took its name. The codfish-tail coat was in fashion for ten years. Napoleon's empire lasted not much longer.

A limp and very voluminous cravat enabled this individual to muffle himself to the nose in its voluminous folds. A pimpled countenance, a long, swollen, brick-red nose, high-colored cheek bones, a toothless but appalling, sensual mouth, a low forehead, and ears adorned with thick gold rings, were seemingly grotesque features made terrible by two little slits of eyes, set like a pig's eyes in the man's head; there was obdurate greed in them, and a jovial, and, so to speak, hilarious cruelty. Those keen-sighted, burrowing eyes of freezing and frozen blue, might have been taken as a model for that formidable Eye which the police took for their emblem during

the Revolution. This worthy wore black silk gloves and carried a little switch. He was unmistakably an official personage; there was that in his bearing and in his manner of taking snuff and thrusting it into his nostrils, which told of the self-importance of an understrapper of the Government—the man who magnifies his office when clothed with a little brief authority from high quarters.

His companion's costume was in the same taste, but it was elegant and elegantly worn, and care was expended upon all its details. He wore tight-fitting breeches and boots *à la Suwarrow* which creaked as he walked. His shirt collar reached the tips of his ears, valuable trinkets adorned his person, and he wore a spencer over his coat, an aristocratic fashion adopted by the Clichyens and gilded youth of the Revolution and destined to survive both gilded youth and Clichyens. Fashions in dress outlived political parties in those days, a sure sign of unsettlement which reappeared even in 1830. This perfect *muscadin* seemed to be about thirty years of age; he had the air of a well-bred man and a consciousness of some kind of superiority seemed to lurk beneath coxcombry that almost reached the pitch of insolence. His pallid countenance looked as though there was not a single drop of blood in it; there was a sardonic turn about the sharp, short nose; it put you in mind of a skull, and the green eyes were inscrutable; they told no more than the thin, pinched lips chose to tell.

The man in the cinnamon-brown coat seemed almost genial, compared with this thin, wizened young man, who twirled a rattan cane with a gold knob that glittered in the sunshine; the first might be willing to take the executioner's place; but the second would not hesitate to ensnare innocence and beauty and virtue in the toils of slander and intrigue, and drowned or poisoned his victims with perfect equanimity. The red-faced man would have tried to cheer up the victim with rough jokes; the other would not so much as smile. The first, a man of forty-five, had evidently a weakness for women and good cheer. Such men have always some appetite which

makes them the slaves of their calling. But his companion had neither vices nor passions. He was a born spy; he was in the diplomatic service; his was a love of art for art's sake. He found the ideas, his fellow carried them out; he represented the thought, the other was its outward and visible manifestation.

"This must surely be Gondreville, my good woman," the younger man began.

"People hereabouts don't say 'my good woman,'" answered Michu. "We plain folk still call each other plain 'citizen' and 'citizeness' out here."

"Oh!" returned the young man, in the most natural way in the world. He did not seem to be at all put out.

It sometimes happens that a card player, in the middle of a run of luck, feels that his luck is broken at the sight of a new face opposite; the man's voice, manner, and expression, like his way of shuffling the cards, are so many warnings of defeat. All gamblers, and écarté players especially, know this sensation. Michu felt something of the kind, a prophetic collapse. Dim forebodings of death, a confused vision of the scaffold, flashed across his mind; a voice cried that this *muscadin* would be his death, though as yet the two men were total strangers. So he had spoken rudely; he was and meant to be uncivil.

"You are State Councillor Malin's man, aren't you?" asked the second man from Paris.

"I am my own master," returned Michu.

The younger man turned to the women, and said, in the most polite manner, "Are we at Gondreville, ladies? That is all we want to know; M. Malin is expecting us."

"There is the park," said Michu, pointing to the open iron gate.

"And why are you hiding that rifle, my pretty child?" said the jovial personage (he had caught a glimpse of the barrel as he came through the gate).

"Always at it, even in the country," smiled the younger man. A thought struck them both; they turned back, and

Michu read their suspicions in spite of their impassive faces. Marthe allowed them to look at the rifle, Courant barking all the time; she felt convinced that her husband was meditating some dark deed, and was almost pleased by the stranger's perspicacity. Michu flung her a glance that made her tremble; then he took up the rifle and set about loading it with a bullet, accepting all the consequences of the encounter and risk of possible detection. It seemed as if he did not value his life in the least, and his wife clearly understood his fatal resolution.

"So you have wolves in these parts, have you?" asked the younger man.

"There are always wolves wherever there are sheep. You are in Champagne, and yonder there is a forest. But we have wild boars as well, and we have big and small game, we have some of all sorts," said Michu, in a sarcastic tone.

The two men exchanged glances, and the older said, "I'll wager, Corentin, that this is that Michu fellow——"

"We did not herd pigs together that I know of," said the bailiff.

"No, but we have presided over Jacobins, citizen," returned the cynical elder,—"you at Arcis, and I elsewhere. You keep up the courtesy of the carmagnole, but it is out of fashion now, my boy."

"The park is large, I think we might lose ourselves in it; since you are the bailiff, you can show us the way to the château," the man addressed as Corentin remarked in a peremptory tone.

Michu whistled for his boy and continued to ram home the charge. Corentin looked Marthe over with indifferent eyes, whereas his companion seemed to be charmed with her; but Corentin saw traces of anguish that escaped the notice of the old libertine who took alarm at the rifle. And in this little, yet important trifle, the two men's whole characters were revealed.

"I have an appointment on the other side of the forest," said Michu; "I cannot go with you myself, but my boy here will show you the way to the château. What way can you





have come to Gondreville? Did you go round by Cinq-Cygne?"

"Like you, we had something on hand in the forest," said Corentin, without a trace of irony in his manner.

"François!" called Michu, "show these gentlemen the way to the château; take them along the bypaths, so that they will meet no one on the way; they are to keep clear of beaten tracks.—Come here a minute!" he added, seeing that the two men had turned their backs and walked away, talking together in a low voice.

Michu caught up the child and kissed him almost solemnly, with a look in his face that confirmed his wife's fears. A cold shiver ran down her back; she looked at her mother, but her eyes were dry; she was past crying.

"Off with you," said Michu, addressing the boy. And he watched him out of sight.

Couraut began to bark again, this time in the direction of Grouage.

"Oh! there's Violette. That is the third time that he has been past here since the morning. What can be going on? That will do, Couraut!"

A few minutes later they heard a horse come trotting on the road, and Violette, mounted on one of the ponies much in use among farmers round about Paris, showed his face. It was a deeply wrinkled countenance, the color of wood, looking all the darker under the shadow of a round, broad-brimmed hat. His gray, malevolent, bright eyes dissembled the treachery of his character. A pair of thin legs, covered to the knees with linen gaiters, hung unsupported by the stirrups, so that they were kept in position, to all appearance, by the weight of his thick, hobnailed boots. His gray hair fell in curls at the back of his head over a *limousine,* a rough black and white striped carter's cloak, which he wore over his short jacket. The man's clothes, his short-legged gray pony, his way of riding, with his chest thrown out and shoulders thrown back, the jagged and worn bridle held in a coarse, chapped, earth-colored hand,—everything about Violette gave the impression

that this was a grasping, ambitious peasant, who means to own land and will have it at all costs. The line of his mouth, with its bluish lip, might have been cut by a surgeon's bistoury; his face and forehead were so furrowed by innumerable wrinkles, that all flexibility was lost, and such expression as it possessed lay wholly in the contours. There seemed to be a menace in the hard, sharply cut lines, in spite of the air of humility which almost all country people can assume to hide their feelings and their schemes, a humility which answers the same purpose as the imperturbable gravity of the Oriental and the savage.

Violette had been a day laborer. He had come to be the servant of Grouage by a system of ever-increasing malevolence, and he still kept up that system though he had reached a position far above his first aspirations. He wished ill to his neighbor and he wished it fervently; if he had the chance he would help him to ill-luck, and it was a labor of love. Violette was frankly envious, but with all his malevolence, he kept within the limits of the law, precisely as the Opposition does, and neither more nor less. It was his belief that his own success depended upon the failure of others; every one above him was an enemy against whom any weapons were fair. This is a very common type of character among the peasants. His great affair of the moment was to obtain from Malin an extension of his lease, which had but six years to run. He was jealous of Michu's success, so he kept a close watch over him. The peasants used to tease Violette about his intimacy with the Michus; but with a hope of another twelve years' lease before his eyes, the cunning farmer was on the watch to do a service to the Government or to Malin, and he knew that Malin distrusted Michu. With the help of the gamekeeper at Gondreville, the rural policeman, and the peasant folk that gathered firewood, Violette kept the commissary at Arcis informed of every little thing that Michu did. That functionary had failed to enlist Marianne, the servant-girl, in the interests of the Government; but Violette and his confederates knew all that went on through Gaucher,

the lad, bribing him with trifles, such as waistcoats, buckles, cotton stockings, and nice things to eat. Michu trusted Gaucher, and the boy, for that matter, had no suspicion that his gossip could do any harm. Michu did not know that Violette blackened and distorted everything that he did, and made a crime of every action with the wildest suppositions; but he knew the man's vile motive for coming so often to the house, and amused himself by mystifying him.

"What, here again! You must have a good deal to do over at Bellache," said Michu.

"Again! is a word of reproach, M. Michu. You don't reckon to play the sparrows a tune on such a clarionet, do you? I did not know you had that rifle——"

"It came up in one of my fields where rifles grow," returned Michu. "Stay, this is how I sow them." He pointed the gun at a viper thirty paces away and cut the reptile in two.

"Did you get that highwayman's weapon to protect your master? Perhaps he made you a present of it."

"Came down from Paris on purpose," said Michu.

"It is a fact that there is a good deal of talk about his journey, all over the countryside. Some say that he is in disgrace, and some that he wants to see his way clear here.—And, come to think of it, why should he drop down on us without a word of warning, just like the First Consul?"

"I am not such a friend of his as to be in his confidence."

"Then you have not seen him yet?"

"I did not know that he was here till I came back from my round in the forest," said Michu, reloading his rifle.

"He has sent to Arcis for M. Grévin; they will be tribuning something or other."

(Malin had been a tribune once.)

"If you are going in the direction of Cinq-Cygne, you can take me with you; I am going that way," said Michu, turning to Violette.

But Violette was too timorous to take such a man as Michu up behind him; he set spurs to his horse; and the Judas of Gondreville, gun on shoulder, made a dash for the avenue.

"Who can Michu have in his mind?" said Marthe when he had gone.

"He has looked very dark ever since he knew that M. Malin was here," said her mother. "But it is damp; let us go in."

The two women were sitting in the chimney-corner when Couraut began to bark.

"There is Michu!" cried Marthe.

And indeed it was Michu who came upstairs. His wife in anxiety went to him in their room.

"See if there is any one in the house," he said in an unsteady voice.

"No one," she said; "Marianne is out in the field with the cow, and Gaucher——"

"Where is Gaucher?"

"I do not know."

"I have my doubts of that young rogue. Go up to the garret and make a thorough search; look for him in every nook and corner in the place."

Marthe went. When she came back again, her husband was on his knees at his prayers.

"What is the matter?" she asked, in dismay. Michu put his arms about her waist, drew her towards him, kissed her on her forehead, and said unsteadily, "If we are never to see each other again, you ought to know how much I have loved you, my poor wife. There is a letter for you in a round tin box buried at the foot of the larch yonder in that clump of trees," he continued after a pause, indicating the tree as he spoke. "Follow the instructions in the letter from point to point. Do not touch it till after my death. After all, whatever may happen to me, think, in spite of men's injustice, that this arm of mine dealt justice for God."

Marthe's face had grown paler and paler till she was white as her linen. Her eyes were wide with terror; she gazed fixedly at her husband, and tried to speak, but her throat was parched. Michu slipped from her like a shadow. He had tied Couraut fast to the bed-foot, and the animal began to howl in despair.

Michu had serious cause to be angry with M. Marion; but all his anger was transferred to a man far more criminal in his opinion, and that man was Malin. Malin's secrets were open to the bailiff's eyes. No one was so well qualified to appreciate the State Councillor's conduct. In matters political, Michu's father-in-law had been in Malin's confidence at the time when Malin was nominated, through Grévin's diligence, to represent the Aube in the Convention.

Perhaps it may be worth while to explain how the Simeuses and the Cinq-Cygnes came to confront Malin, and to show that the circumstances that weighed so heavily on the destiny of the twins and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, weighed yet more heavily on Marthe and Michu.

The Hôtel Cinq-Cygne at Troyes stood opposite the Hôtel Simeuse. When a populace let loose by hands no less cunning than prudent had sacked the Hôtel Simeuse; when the Marquis and Marquise had been discovered and delivered over to the National Guard, who took them to prison on a charge of corresponding with the enemies of the Nation; then the mob, arguing logically, raised the shout, "To the Cinq-Cygnes!" It was inconceivable to them that the Cinq-Cygnes should be innocent of the crimes of the Simeuses.

The brave old Marquis de Simeuse had two sons, two lads of eighteen; he was afraid that their courage might get them into trouble; and to save them he sent them, a few minutes before the storm broke, to their aunt, the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne. Two attached servants locked the young men into the house. The old Marquis bade them keep everything from his sons' knowledge if the worst came to the worst. Laurence de Cinq-Cygne, then a girl of twelve, loved both her cousins equally, nor of the two brothers could it be said which loved her best. The likeness between the two Simeuses, as often happens with twins, was so strong that for a long while their mother dressed them in different colors so as to know them apart. The first born was named Paul Marie; the younger, Marie Paul.

Laurence de Cinq-Cygne was in the secret of the situation;

the girl played a woman's part excellently well. She coaxed and implored, and kept her cousins in the house till the mob surrounded the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne. The brothers learned the danger at the same moment, and exchanged their thoughts in a single glance. They decided on their course at once. Their two servants and the Comtesse's men were armed, the doors barricaded, the shutters closed, and the two young men appeared at a window with five servants behind them and the Abbé d'Hauteserre, a relative of the Cinq-Cygnes. The eight brave men opened a murderous fire on the mob. Every shot killed or wounded an assailant. Laurence, instead of giving way to despair, loaded and reloaded for them with extraordinary coolness, and served out bullets and powder. The Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne threw herself on her knees and began to pray.

"What are you doing, mother?" asked Laurence.

"I am praying for them and for you."

Sublime words spoken once before under similar circumstances, by the mother of the Prince de la Paix in Spain. Eleven men were killed and lay among the wounded in the street. A reception of this kind may have a cooling or an exciting effect on a mob; they either warm to their work or they give up. The men in front fell back in panic, but the crowd behind had come to plunder and slay, and at the sight of their dead, they raised a howl of "Murder!"

Prudent folk went off in search of the Representative of the People. Meanwhile, the brothers had heard the history of the day's fatal events; they suspected the Representative of a wish to ruin their house; suspicion soon became a certainty, and hot for vengeance they took up their places under the arched gateway, loaded their guns ready to shoot down Malin as soon as he showed himself. The Countess lost her head completely; she saw her house in ashes, her daughter murdered before her eyes, and reproached her nephews for a gallant defence that set all France talking for a week. Laurence opened the door a few inches in reply to Malin's summons. At sight of her he came in, relying on his own

formidable reputation and the child's helplessness. But when he demanded the reason for this armed resistance, she cut him short at the first word.

"What, sir, do you give liberty to France, and cannot protect people in their own houses? They want to murder us and pull down our hôtel; have we no right to keep them out by force?"

Malin stood nailed to the spot.

"You! the grandson of a bricklayer employed by the Great Marquis to build his château, allow our father to be dragged away to prison, on the strength of a slanderous lie!" cried Marie Paul.

Malin saw each young man clutch convulsively at his rifle, and gave himself up for lost. "He shall be set at liberty," he said.

"That promise of yours has saved your life," Marie Paul said solemnly. "But if it is not fulfilled by to-night, we shall know where to find you again."

"As for that howling mob outside," added Laurence, "unless you send them away, the first shot from the window shall be for you. Now, M. Malin, go out!"

Malin went out and harangued the crowd. He talked about the sacredness of the hearth, the right of *habeas corpus,* and the fact that an Englishman's house is his castle. He said that the Law and the People were supreme; that the Law meant the People; that the People should only act through the Law, and that might should always be on the side of right. Dire necessity gave him eloquence. The mob dispersed. But he never forgot that scorn in the faces of the Simeuses, nor the tone of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's "Go out!"

So, when the Cinq-Cygne lands were sold by the Nation (Laurence's brother, the Comte de Cinq-Cygne, being an *émigré*), the partition was made strictly. The agents of the District, acting on Malin's instructions, left Laurence nothing but the château, the park and gardens, and the farm of Cinq-Cygne, for Laurence had no right to more than her

légitime, the minimum share of the inheritance secured by law to each child. The Nation stood in the place of the Comte de Gondreville, especially since he had taken arms against the Republic.

The night after this stormy outbreak, Laurence prayed her cousins to leave France. She begged so earnestly, fearing that Malin's treachery might ensnare them, that they took horse and reached the outposts of the Prussian army. They had scarcely reached the forest of Gondreville before the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne was surrounded. Malin, Representative of the People, came himself and in force to arrest the heirs of the House of Simeuse. He did not venture to lay hands on the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, who was ill in bed with a terrible attack of nervous fever, nor yet on Laurence, a child of twelve. The servants, in terror of the Republic and its severity, had all disappeared.

Next morning the news of the stand made by the two brothers, and of their flight to Prussia, had spread all about the neighborhood. Three thousand persons gathered in front of the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne, and the house was pulled down with inexplicable rapidity. Madame de Cinq-Cygne was removed to the Hôtel Simeuse, where she died in a second attack of fever.

Michu only appeared on the political scene after all these things had taken place, for the Marquis and Marquise remained in prison for five months. The representative of the Aube, meanwhile, was away on a mission. But now that Marion had sold Gondreville to Malin, and the popular ebullition was forgotten in the country, Michu understood Malin thoroughly, or at any rate thought that he understood him; for Malin, like Fouché, was one of those many-sided men with unfathomed depths under every side of their characters, who are inscrutable at the time, and can only be understood long after the game is over.

Before taking any important step in life, Malin never failed to take counsel with his faithful friend Grévin, the notary at Arcis. Grévin's judgment on men and things at

a distance was sound, clear-sighted, and accurate. Such a habit is the wisdom of a second-rate man and the source of his strength. Now, in November, 1803, the State Councillor's position was so critical that a letter might have compromised the friends. Malin's nomination as a senator was certain; he was afraid to have an explanation in Paris; so he left his town house and came out to Gondreville, choosing from among several reasons for his departure, that one which should give him an air of zeal in Bonaparte's eyes, though he thought not of the State, but wholly of himself.

So while Michu lay in wait, and followed him in the park watching like a savage, for the ripe moment for his revenge, the politic Malin, with his habit of squeezing his own advantage out of every event, had brought his friend to walk in a little space of grass in the English garden. It was a lonely spot, well adapted to secret conferences. The pair therefore were standing together in the middle of the grass plot, talking in such low tones that no one at a distance could overhear them, while they could change the conversation so soon as any listener approached.

"Why not have stayed in a room at the château?" asked Grévin.

"Did you not see those two men that the Prefect of Police has sent me?"

(Though Fouché had been the soul of the consular cabinet in the affair of the plot in which Pichegru, Georges, Moreau, and Polignac were involved, he was not at that time the Minister of Police, but an ordinary State Councillor like Malin himself.)

"Those two men are Fouché's two arms," he continued. "One of them put an end to the rising in the West in a fortnight in the year VII. That was that young *muscadin* with vinegar on his lips, and verjuice in his eyes, and a face like a decanter of lemonade. The other is one of Lenoir's brood, the only man to whom the great traditions of the old police were handed down. I simply asked for an ordinary detective, backed up by an accredited agent; and they send

me yonder pair of sharpers. Ah! Grévin, Fouché has a mind to know my game, beyond a doubt. That is why I left those gentlemen to finish their dinner at the château. Let them look where they like, they will not find Louis XVIII. there, nor the slightest clue."

"Well and good; but what may this game be that you are playing?"

"Eh! a double game, my friend, is dangerous; but so far as Fouché is concerned, this is a triple game. I am in the confidence of the Bourbons, and it is possible that he has got wind of it."

"You in the confidence of the Bourbons?"

"Yes."

"Then you do not remember Favras?"

The remark seemed to make an impression on the Councillor.

"Since when?" continued Grévin after a pause.

"Since the Consul was appointed for life."

"But there are no proofs?"

"Not *that!*" said Malin, clicking his thumb nail against his front teeth.

In a few words Malin gave his friend a concise sketch of the critical position into which Bonaparte was forcing England. The national existence of England was threatened by the camp at Boulogne. Malin explained the extent of a plan of invasion, of which France and Europe knew nothing, albeit Pitt had his suspicions of it. Then he sketched the critical position into which England in turn was forcing Bonaparte. A formidable coalition,—Prussia, Austria, and Russia,—subsidized by English gold, was to bring seven hundred thousand men into the field. And at the same time, France was encompassed by an appalling network of conspiracy which united the Mountain, the Chouans, the Royalist party, and the Princes.

"So long as Louis XVIII. had three consuls to deal with he believed that anarchy would continue, and, favored by some movement or other, he hoped to play a return match

for the 13th Vendémiaire and the 18th Fructidor," said Malin. "But this consulship for life has unmasked Bonaparte's designs. He will be Emperor before long. The sub-lieutenant of old days is thinking of founding a dynasty! So this time it is an attempt on his life; and they are setting about it even more cleverly than they did in that Rue Saint Nicaise business. Pichegru, Georges, Moreau, and the Duc d'Enghien are in it, so are two of the Comte d'Artois' friends—Polignac and Rivière."

"What a combination!" exclaimed Grévin.

"France is honeycombed with conspiracy under the surface. They want the assault to be general; no stone will be left unturned. A hundred energetic men with Georges at their head are to set upon the Consular Guard and the Consul, man to man."

"Very well; denounce them."

"The Consul, the Minister of Police, the Prefect, and Fouché have held some of the threads of this widespread web these two months past. But they do not know the whole extent of it; and at the present moment they are leaving almost all the conspirators at liberty, so as to find out all."

"As to right," continued the notary, "the Bourbons have far more right to conceive and plan and execute an attempt against Bonaparte, than Bonaparte had to conspire on the 18th Brumaire against the Republic. He was a son of the Republic; he slew his mother; whereas the Bourbons want to come back to their house. The list of *émigrés* was closed, and names have been continually struck out of it; the Roman Catholic religion has been restored, and reactionary decrees are multiplied. I can understand that the Princes, seeing all this, know that their return would be a difficult business, not to say impossible. Bonaparte becomes the one obstacle in the way, and they wish to clear away the obstacle. Nothing more simple. If the conspirators fail, they are brigands; if they succeed, they will be heroes. Under the circumstances your hesitation seems to me to be natural enough."

"This is the question," said Malin. "The Duc d'Enghien's head is to be flung down to the Bourbons, as the Convention flung down the head of Louis XVI. to the Kings of Europe; and Bonaparte must be made to do it. Then he will be as much implicated as the rest of us in the courses of the Revolution; or else the present idol of the French nation and their future Emperor will be hurled down, and the real throne will be raised on the wreck of his greatness. I am at the mercy of events; of a well-directed bullet; of another and more successful machine like the one in the Rue Saint Nicaise. I have not been told everything. The proposal was that I should rally the Council of State at the critical moment, and control the action of the legal machinery that will bring about the restoration of the Bourbons."

"Wait," suggested the notary.

"I cannot wait. I have only this present moment in which to make up my mind."

"How so?"

"The two Simeuses are in the plot. They are here in the neighborhood. I must either raise a pursuit, allow them to commit themselves and rid myself of them, or else protect them secretly. I asked for understrappers, and they send me the pick of their lynxes; and send them through Troyes so that they may have the gendarmerie at their orders."

"Gondreville is a bird in the hand, the conspiracy is a bird in the bush," pronounced Grévin. "Neither Fouché nor Talleyrand, your two partners, are in it. Be aboveboard with them. What! every man that cut off King Louis' head is in the Government, France is full of buyers of National lands, and you must try to bring back those that will want Gondreville again! Unless the Bourbons are downright idiots they will be sure to pass a sponge over all that we have done. Warn Bonaparte."

"A man of my rank does not stoop to denounce," Malin answered quickly.

"Your rank?" cried Grévin, with a smile.

"I have been offered the Seals."

"I can understand that you feel dazzled; it is my duty to see clearly through this political darkness, to smell the way out. Now it is impossible to foresee events that might bring back the Bourbons, when a General Bonaparte has eighty men-of-war and four hundred thousand men. It is an even harder thing, in political forecasts, to know how long it may be before a tottering power will fall. But Bonaparte's power is still in the growing stage, old fellow. . . . Is it not more likely that Fouché has set some one on to sound you, so as to know the bottom of your mind and get rid of you?"

"No. I am sure of the ambassador. And what is more, Fouché would not send me such a pair of apes; for I know them too well not to have my suspicions."

"I am afraid of them," answered Grévin. "Why did Fouché send them, if he does not bear you a grudge, and has no wish to put you to the proof? Fouché is not the man to play such a trick without some reason for it."

"That decides me!" exclaimed Malin. "I shall never be at peace with those two Simeuses. Perhaps Fouché, who knows my position, has no mind to miss them, and thinks to get at Condé through them."

"Eh! old man, the owner of Gondreville is not likely to be disturbed under Bonaparte!"

Malin happening to look up just then, caught sight of a gun-barrel gleaming among the leaves of a great lime tree.

"I thought I heard a click as if some one cocked a trigger, and I was not mistaken," he remarked, as he took his stand behind the trunk of a large tree. The notary followed him, startled by the sudden move.

"It is Michu," he said. "I can see his red beard."

"Don't look as if you were frightened," resumed Malin, and he walked slowly away. "What can the man want with owners of this place, for he certainly was not aiming at you," he repeated again and again. "If he overheard us, it is

my duty to recommend him to the prayers of the congregation! We should have done better to go out into the plain. Who the devil would have thought of distrusting the wind that blows?"

"Live and learn," said the notary; "but he was a long way off, and we were talking close together."

"I will just mention it to Corentin," returned Malin.

A few minutes later, Michu came home again with a white, drawn face.

"What is the matter with you?" cried his terrified wife.

"Nothing," returned Michu. He saw that Violette was in the house; and for him the man's presence was like a thunderbolt.

Michu took a chair and sat down quietly by the fire. He drew out a letter from a tin canister, such as soldiers use to keep their papers in, and flung the sheet on the flames. This circumstance, and Marthe's deep sigh of relief as if some enormous weight were lifted off her mind, tickled Violette's curiosity not a little. Michu leant his rifle against the chimney-piece with wonderful coolness. Marianne and the mother and Marthe were spinning in the lamplight.

"Come, François," said the bailiff. "Come along to bed, will you!"

He took the child roughly by the waist and carried him off. Outside upon the staircase he dropped his voice to a whisper.

"Go down into the cellar," he said in the little lad's ear. "Take two bottles of Mâcon, empty out one-third of each, and fill them up with the cognac that stands on the shelf of bottles; then take another bottle and fill it half with white wine, and half with brandy. Do it very neatly, and put the three bottles on the top of the empty barrel by the cellar door. As soon as you hear me open the window, come out of the cellar, saddle my horse, ride off to the Knaves' Gibbet, and wait for me there."

"The little rascal never will go to bed," said Michu when

he came back. "He wants to do like grown-up people, and hear and see and know all that is going on. You set my folk a bad example, Daddy Violette."

"Good Lord!" cried Violette, "who has loosened your tongue? You never said so much in your life before."

"Do you think that I let you come and spy on me, and don't see it? You are on the wrong track, Daddy Violette. If you were on my side instead of the side of them that bear me a grudge, I would do better yet for you than a renewal of your lease."

"Better yet? What's that?" asked the rapacious peasant, opening wide eyes.

"I would sell you my land, cheap."

"No bargain is cheap so long as there's something to pay," Violette remarked sententiously.

"I want to leave the neighborhood, and I will give you my farm at Mousseau,—steadings, standing crops, and live stock,—for fifty thousand francs."

"Really?"

"Does that suit you?"

"Lord, one must see."

"Let us talk it over. But I want a handsel."

"I have nothing."

"A word."

"Two if you like!"

"Tell me who sent you here just now?"

"I had gone and come back again, and I thought I would just look in and wish you a good night."

"Come back again and left your horse behind! For what kind of an idiot do you take me? It is a lie; you shall not have my farm."

"Well, then, it was M. Grévin, it was. He said to me, 'Violette, we want Michu; go and look for him, and if he is not in, wait till he comes.' I thought he meant me to stop here for the evening."

"Are those sharks from Paris still at the château?"

"Ah, I am not so sure; but there were people in the drawing-room."

"You shall have my farm. Let us settle the business. Wife, go and find wine for the bargain. Bring us some of the best Roussillon, that belonged to the ex-Marquis. . . . We are not children. You will find a couple of bottles on the empty barrel by the cellar door, and a bottle of white wine."

"It is a bargain," said Violette, who never got flustered with liquor. "Let us drink."

"You have fifty thousand francs under the bricks on the floor of your bedroom, all along under the bed; and you are going to pay them over to me a fortnight after old Grévin has passed the contract."

Violette's eyes were fixed in a stare on Michu's face; he grew ghastly pale.

"Aha! You come sneaking round an old hand of a Jacobin that had the honor to preside over the Arcis Club, and imagine that he will not see through you. I have eyes in my head. I saw that your floor had been newly laid, and I felt sure that you had not taken it up to sow corn there. Let us drink."

Violette was troubled. He drank off a large glass without noticing the strength of the liquor; terror was like a hot iron in his vitals, and greed burned hotter than the brandy. He would have given a good deal to be at home again, so as to change the position of his hoard. The three women smiled.

"Does that suit you?" continued Michu, refilling Violette's glass.

"Why, yes."

"You will be under your own roof, you old rogue!"

Half an hour of warm discussion ensued over the date of taking possession and the endless points that peasants raise over a bargain. Assertions were made, and glasses drained, there were specious promises and denials, and exclamations—"That is true, eh!"—"Quite true."—"That is

my last word!"—"As I said before!"—"I wish I may have my throat cut if——"—"May the wine poison me if I am not telling the truth"—when in the midst of it all Violette lurched forward and lay with his head on the table; not tipsy, but dead drunk. Michu, watching him, had hurried to the window and opened it, when the man's eyes grew troubled.

"Where is that rascal Gaucher?" he asked, turning to his wife.

"He is in bed."

"Go and sit across his door, Marianne," said the bailiff, addressing the girl, "and keep a watch on him. And you, mother, stay downstairs and just look after this spy here. Keep a sharp lookout, and don't open the door to any one but François. It is a matter of life and death!" he added in a deep voice. "Every creature under this roof must say that I have not left the house to-night; stick to that with your heads on the block!" Then to his wife, "Come, mother, come, put on your shoes and your coif, and we must be off! No questions; I am coming with you."

For the last three-quarters of an hour there had been a despotic, irresistible authority in the man's eyes and gestures. There is a mysterious source from which men draw this extraordinary power; it is common to the great captain who can flash fire through the ranks of men on the battlefield, to the great orator who carries away his audience, and, let us admit it, the great criminal draws on the same source for his most daring crimes. An invincible influence seems at such times to emanate from the man's brain; his words are fraught with it; his movements seem to inject his will into others. The three women knew instinctively that some dreadful crisis was at hand; they felt it in the swiftness of his actions. Michu's face was glistening, his forehead spoke, his eyes shone like stars; they had seen the beads of sweat at the roots of his hair, and more than once his voice shook with impatience and rage. So Marthe obeyed him passively. Armed to the teeth, and gun on shoulder, Michu made a dash

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for the avenue, his wife followed close behind him, and in a few minutes they reached the cross-roads where François was waiting hidden among the brushwood.

"The boy has sense," Michu remarked, as he noticed this. It was the first word that he had spoken. His wife had been running so fast that she was breathless and could not speak.

"Go back to the lodge, hide in the thickest tree by the house, and watch the country and the park," said Michu, turning to his son. "We are all abed, mind; we shall not open to anybody. Your grandmother is sitting up, but she will not stir until she hears you speak. Keep every word in mind. It is a matter of life and death for your father and mother. It must never come out in a court of law that we spent the night out of doors."

These words were spoken in the child's ear. François slipped away through the bushes, like an eel through the mud, and Michu turned to his wife.

"Up with you," he cried, "and pray God to be with us. Hold tight! The mare may drop dead."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before the animal started off like a race-horse at a blow from Michu's heels and a strong grip of his knees. In a quarter of an hour they were clear of the forest. Michu had kept to the short cut, through the darkness, and they stood on the skirts of the wood, and saw the roof ridges of the château of Cinq-Cygne lying in the moonlight. Michu tied the horse to a tree, and sprang lightly up a knoll which overlooked the valley of Cinq-Cygne.

The château on which Marthe and Michu looked down for a moment was a picturesque detail in the landscape. It was neither large nor of any importance from an architectural point of view, yet it possessed a certain amount of archæological interest. The old fifteenth century edifice stood on rising ground, encircled by a large walled moat, still full of water. The walls were built of rubble, but they were seven feet thick, and the very plainness of the structure gave an admirable idea of the rough, warrior life of feudal times.

It was a very quaint château, consisting of two massive reddish-colored towers connected by a long building, with true *croisées*—mullion windows with stone bars in the form of a cross rudely carved like vine stems. The staircase rose outside the château in a pentagonal tower set in the middle of the front, and was only accessible through a narrow door with a pointed arch.

The ground floor and the first story had been modernized in the time of Louis Quatorze, and the huge roof above had been pierced with dormer windows, each surmounted by a carved tympanum.

In front of the house spread a great lawn divided in two by a paved way through the middle. On either side of this lawn stood the various stables, cow-sheds, and poultry yards, the bakery, and other outbuildings raised on the ruins of the two wings of the feudal castle. The great trees which grew on the lawn itself had only recently been felled. Two little huts in which the gardeners lived stood on either side of the bridge over the moat; the iron gateway between them was of feeble design and evidently modern. In former times no doubt the château had been a square building about a central court, with towers at the four angles and a massive round arched gateway to defend the drawbridge where the modern iron gateway stood. All this had disappeared, but the two massive towers with their pepper-box roofs had escaped destruction, and these with the bell turret in the middle formed the principal features of the village. The spire of the church, another old building only a few paces away, harmonized with the mass of the castle.

All the roofs and domes shone out brightly in the fitful gleams of moonlight. Michu was looking down upon the stately house in a way that worked a complete change in his wife's thoughts concerning him; his face was calmer, there was hope and a kind of pride in his expression. He looked round the horizon with a certain uneasiness, and listened to all the sounds over the countryside. It must have been nine o'clock by this time; the moon shone down upon the edge

of the forest, and the knoll was most brightly lighted of all. This state of things the bailiff apparently considered to be dangerous, for he came down as though he were afraid of being seen. Yet there was not a sound to trouble the stillness in the beautiful valley shut in upon this side by the Forest of Nodesme.

Marthe, trembling and exhausted, was expecting something to happen after such a ride. For what were her services required? For a good deed or a crime? Michu came up and whispered, "You are to go to the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne; ask to speak with her, and when she comes, ask for a word with her in private. When no one can overhear you, say, 'Mademoiselle, your cousins are in danger of their lives. Some one is waiting for you outside to explain the why and wherefore.' If she seems afraid, if she cannot trust you, say, 'They are involved in a plot against the First Consul and the plot is discovered.' Don't give your name; they suspect us too much."

Marthe Michu raised her face, and looked up at her husband.

"Michu, are you doing this for them?" she asked.

"Well, and if I am?" asked he, knitting his brows. He took her question for a reproach.

"You do not understand," she said; and suddenly she fell on her knees before him and took his big hand in hers, and kissed it and covered it with tears.

"Make haste!" he said; "you can cry afterwards;" and for a moment he held her tightly in his arms.

When the sound of his wife's footsteps had died away, there were tears in the eyes of this man of iron. He had distrusted Marthe on account of her father's opinions; he had kept the secrets of his life from her; and now the beauty of his wife's simple nature had been suddenly revealed to him, just as the greatness of his own character had dawned upon her. Marthe passed from the uttermost depths of humiliation—from the woman's feeling that she is degraded by the baseness of the man whose name she bears—to a rapture

of glory; passed suddenly and without transition. Would it have been wonderful if her strength had failed her? The sharpest fear had preyed upon her mind on the way from the lodge to Cinq-Cygne; she had "walked through blood," as she told her husband afterwards; and now in a moment she felt herself caught up to heaven among the angels. And he, who felt that he was not appreciated, who took his wife's melancholy and drooping attitude for want of affection, who had lived out of the house so as to leave her to herself, and centered all his affection upon their child—he understood in a moment all that her tears meant, and knew that she cursed the part that her fair face and her father's will had forced her to play. Out of the midst of the storm the brightest flame of joy had leapt out for them like a lightning-flash. A lightning-flash indeed! Each of them thought of those ten years of misunderstanding and took the whole blame of them. Michu stood motionless, lost in deep musings, resting one arm on his gun and his chin on his arm. Such a moment atoned for all the pain of the most painful past.

The same thoughts were working in Marthe's mind, and her heart was heavy at the thought of the danger the Simeuses were running; she understood the whole position, even the faces of the two men from Paris, but she could not explain the rifles to herself. She fled like a fawn till she reached the roadway, and was startled by the footsteps of a man behind her. She cried out; it was Michu's big hand that stopped her mouth.

"Looking out from the top of the knoll, I saw the gleam of the silver rims of gendarmes' caps," he said. "They are some way off. Go round through the gap in the fosse between Mademoiselle's Tower and the stables; the dog will not bark at you; come up the garden and call to the Countess through the window; tell them to saddle mademoiselle's horse and to bring the animal through the gap. I shall be there. But first I am going to find out what these Parisians mean to do, and how to escape them."

The danger was coming down upon them like an ava-

lanche; the necessity of preparing for it gave Marthe wings.

The Frankish name, common to the Cinq-Cygnes and the Chargebœufs, was Duineff. The younger branch of the Chargebœufs took the name in consequence of a defence of the castle once made by five daughters of the house in the absence of their father. No one expected such conduct of the sisters, all of them famous for their white fairness. One of the early counts of Champagne gave them the beautiful name to preserve the memory of the deed so long as the family should live. Since this extraordinary feat of arms the daughters of the house carried their heads high, but perhaps not all of them were white as the Swans. Laurence, the last of her race, was an exception to the Salic law; she inherited the name, the fief, and the armorial bearings; for the King of France confirmed the charter granted by the Count of Champagne, in virtue of which the Cinq-Cygnes' lands and titles may be handed down from mother to son. So Laurence was Countess of Cinq-Cygne. Her husband must take her name and the arms of her house and their motto, *Mourir en chantant,* the heroic answer made by the eldest of the five sisters when summoned to surrender,—"they would *die singing.*" Laurence was a worthy descendant of those fair heroines; her whiteness seemed like a challenge to fate. The least outline of the blue veins could be seen beneath the delicate close tissue of skin; and hair of the prettiest shade of gold looked marvelously fair with eyes of the darkest blue. Everything about Laurence was tiny and delicate. But in spite of her slender shape and her milk-white skin, the soul that dwelt in her fragile body was tempered like that of a man of the loftiest character; no one, not even an observer, would have guessed this at sight of her gentle expression, her aquiline nose, and a vague suggestion of a sheep's head about her profile. Her exceeding gentleness, high-bred though it was, seemed almost to amount to lamb-like stupidity.

"I look like a dreaming sheep," she sometimes said of herself, with a smile.

Laurence, who said so little, appeared to be not so much

dreamy as torpid. In a grave crisis, the Judith dormant in her nature was revealed at once and grew sublime, and crises unfortunately had not been wanting.

At the age of thirteen, after the events which you already know, Laurence found herself an orphan, in a house in Troyes, opposite a heap of ruins which, but the day before, had been the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne—one of the most curious examples of sixteenth century architecture. M. d'Hauteserre, a relative, became her guardian, and carried off the heiress to the country, without loss of time. The Abbé d'Hauteserre, his brother, was shot down as he was escaping across the square, in peasant's dress; and this had frightened the worthy gentleman; he was in no position to defend his ward's interests. He had two sons in the army with the Princes; and every day of his life, at the slightest sound, he fancied that the Arcis authorities had come to arrest him. The old man bent before the stormy blast, and Laurence, proud of having stood a siege, proud, too, of the white fairness traditional in her house, looked down contemptuously upon his prudent cowardice. *She* only thought of adding lustre to her name. So she had the audacity to hang Charlotte Corday's portrait on the wall of her poverty-stricken sitting-room, and to crown the frame with a little wreath of oak leaves. She corresponded with the twins by messenger; the law punished the offence with death, but she set the law at naught; and the messenger brought answers back at the risk of his life.

Since those tragic days at Troyes, Laurence only lived for the Royalist cause. She had formed pretty sound conclusions as to Madame and Monsieur d'Hauteserre; she saw that they were good but feeble folk; the laws of her sphere did not apply to them. Laurence had too much sense, she was too genuinely indulgent to bear malice against the couple for being what they were; she was kind, amiable, affectionate with them, but she never gave any of her secrets into their keeping. And nothing so shuts up the soul as a life of dissimulation in the family circle. When Laurence came of age, she left the old gentleman to manage her property as be-

fore. If her favorite mare was well groomed, her maid, Catherine, dressed to her taste, and her boy-servant, Gothard, properly turned out, she cared little about anything else. She turned her thoughts to so lofty an end that she could not descend to occupations which would, no doubt, have been pleasant to her in different times. Laurence cared little for dress, and besides, her cousins were not there. She wore a bottle-green riding-habit, or a walking-dress of some cheap material, with a sleeveless bodice fastened with loops of twisted braid; and a loose silk wrapper in the house.

Gothard, her little squire, a quick-witted, mettled lad of fifteen, was her escort, for she was almost always out of doors. She shot over the whole Gondreville estate without any opposition from the tenants or Michu. She sat her horse to admiration, and in sport her skill bordered on the miraculous. The people in the countryside always called her "Mademoiselle" even during the Revolution.

Anybody who has read that great romance, *Rob Roy,* must remember Diana Vernon, for Scott in his conception of her character made one of his very rare departures from his ordinary uninteresting feminine types. That recollection may enable the reader to understand Laurence, if he endows the Scottish huntress with the repressed enthusiasm of a Charlotte Corday, and takes away the amiable liveliness that made Diana so charming.

Laurence had seen her mother die; she had seen the Abbé d'Hauteserre shot down, and the Marquis and Marquise de Simeuse had perished on the scaffold. Her only brother had died of his wounds, her cousins serving in the army of Condé might fall at any moment, and, finally, she had seen the lands of the Simeuses and the Cinq-Cygnes swallowed down, nominally by the Republic, while the Republic had not benefited thereby. Laurence's gravity, degenerating, to all appearance, into stupor, should be conceivable enough.

M. d'Hauteserre, at all events, proved himself a most upright and intelligent guardian. Under his administration Cinq-Cygne looked like a farm-house. The old gentleman

was as little as possible like a valiant knight-at-arms, and very much more like an improving landlord. He had turned a couple of hundred acres or so of park and gardens to good account; grew all that was wanted for the stables and the servants, and bought no firewood. Thanks to the strictest economy, the young Countess recovered a sufficient fortune by the time she came of age. Her surplus income was invested in the Funds. In 1798 the heiress derived an income of twenty thousand francs from government securities, on which, truth to tell, the interest was overdue, and twelve hundred francs from Cinq-Cygne, for the rent had been notably raised when the lease was renewed.

Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre had gone to live in the country on an annuity of three thousand francs in the Tontine Lafarge. They could not afford to live anywhere else on the scanty remains of their fortune, so they lived on at Cinq-Cygne, and Laurence's first act on coming of age had been to give them possession of one wing of the house for their lifetime. The d'Hauteserres were as penurious for their ward as they were for themselves. Every year they put by a thousand crowns for their two sons. The heiress lived on poor fare. The total annual expenditure of Cinq-Cygne did not exceed five thousand francs. But Laurence never went into details, and felt quite satisfied with everything. And her guardian and his wife unconsciously fell under the influence of a character which made itself felt even in the smallest trifles, and ended by admiring the girl whom they had known as a child. A thing that happens seldom enough. But in Laurence's manner, in her guttural voice, in her imperious glance, there was that indescribable something, that inexplicable power, which never fails to inspire awe; even when it is only the appearance of power; for in a fool vacuity is very easily mistaken for depth, as depth is beyond the comprehension of the ordinary mind. For which reasons many people admire anything that they do not understand.

Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre were impressed by the young Countess' habit of silence and her untamed ways;

they were always expecting something great of her. And aristocrat though she was, Laurence had won great respect from the peasants, for her discriminating kindness to them, and the fact that she was not to be deceived. Her name, her sex, her misfortunes, and her unusual life all combined to give her an ascendency over the people in the valley. Sometimes she set out, taking Gothard with her, and was absent all day or even for two days together; yet neither Monsieur nor Madame d'Hauteserre asked her why she had gone away. Laurence (it must be borne in mind) had nothing singular about her. The masculine nature was hidden beneath the most feminine and apparently delicate form. She had an extremely tender heart, but there was virile resolution and stoical fortitude in her head. Her clear-sighted eyes had not learned to shed tears. And no one could have imagined of that slender white wrist, with its faint tracery of blue veins, that it could outweary the arm of the most seasoned horseman; or that her hand, so soft and flexible as it was, could manage a pistol or a fowling-piece with the vigor of a practised sportsman. Out of doors and on horseback, Laurence's dress differed in no way from that of other women; she wore a black handkerchief knotted about her white throat, a coquettish little beaver hat and green veil, so that her complexion, delicate though it was, had never suffered from her long rides in the open air.

Under the Directory and the Consulate, Laurence might do as she pleased and no one gave her a thought. But when the Government became more settled, the newly constituted authorities, the Prefect of the Aube, Malin's friends, and Malin himself, all tried to discredit her.

Laurence's whole mind was engrossed by schemes for overturning Bonaparte. Bonaparte's ambition and triumph had wrought a kind of frenzy in her, but it was a frenzy of a cool and calculating kind.

In the depths of her valley, in the heart of the forest, her eyes were always fixed upon her purpose with a dreadful fixity of gaze; she, the unknown, obscure enemy, of the

man who stood in the full light of glory, thought sometimes of slaying him in the grounds of Malmaison or St. Cloud. This purpose of hers would be in itself a sufficient explanation of her out-door life and habits; but after the Peace of Amiens she had been initiated into a conspiracy, a plot set on foot by men who thought to turn the 18th Brumaire against the First Consul. Since that time Laurence had brought her whole strength and the whole force of hate in her to bear upon a vast and well-contrived scheme for striking down Bonaparte. This was to be operated from without by the mighty coalition of Russia, Prussia, and Austria, which as Emperor he defeated at Austerlitz; and from within by another coalition of men belonging to the most hostile parties now united by a common hate. Many of these, like Laurence, meditated the death of the First Consul, and were not afraid of the word assassination.

At this moment, therefore, a girl, so fragile in appearance, so strong for those who really knew her, was a faithful and sure guide for the nobles who came to and fro between France and Germany to take part in this attack. Fouché was using this co-operation of *émigrés* beyond the Rhine as the basis of his scheme for entangling the Duc d'Enghien in the plot; and the presence of that Prince in the territory of Baden, so close to Strasburg and the frontier, afterwards gave weight to the suspicion. The great question, whether the Prince really had cognizance of the plot, and intended to enter France in case of success, is one of the secrets on which the Bourbon Princes have chosen to keep absolute silence. Gradually, as the story of the time becomes ancient history, it will strike the impartial historian that it was imprudent, to say the least of it, in the Prince, to come so near the frontier at a time when a vast conspiracy was just about to break out, especially as the fact was certainly known to the whole royal family.

In every least thing involving the conspiracy, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne displayed the same prudence which Malin showed when he brought Grévin into the open air for his

interview. She received emissaries, and conferred with them on the outskirts of the Forest of Nodesme, or at a place between Sézanne and Brienne, beyond the valley of Cinq-Cygne. She often rode between thirty and forty miles at a stretch with Gothard, and came back to Cinq-Cygne without the slightest trace of weariness or preoccupation on her fresh face. When Gothard was nine years old, she had read in his eyes the ingenuous admiration that children feel for anything extraordinary. She took the little cowherd for her squire, and taught him to rub down a horse as carefully and thoroughly as any English groom. Seeing the boy's willingness, intelligence, and disinterestedness, she made trial of his devotion, and found not only quick-wittedness but nobleness of nature in him. He had no thought of reward. She set herself to cultivate a nature so young as yet. She was kind to him, as a great lady is kind; attaching him to herself, by attaching herself to him; polishing a half-wild character, while leaving it all its sap and simplicity. And then, when she had sufficiently proved the almost dog-like faithfulness that she had nurtured, Gothard became her ingenious and ingenuous confederate. Nobody could suspect the little peasant boy; he went several times from Cinq-Cygne to Nancy, and nobody knew that he had been from home.

Gothard practised every shift and stratagem known to spies. The excessive suspicion inculcated by his mistress was by no means foreign to his nature. With a woman's wit, a child's innocence, and the continual mental alertness of a conspirator, he hid these remarkable qualities under a countryman's torpor and unfathomable ignorance. The little man, to all appearance, was a clumsy, harmless rustic; but put him at his work, he was agile as a fish and slippery as an eel. Like a dog, he could understand a glance, and read thought by instinct. With his round, red, good-natured, homely face, his sleepy brown eyes, his hair cut in the peasant fashion, his childish dress, and his very slow growth, he still looked like a little boy of ten.

MM. d'Hauteserre and Simeuse, with several other *émigrés,*

had come by way of Alsace and Lorraine into Champagne, protected by their cousin Laurence, who had watched over them all the way from Strasbourg to Bar-sur-Aube. Another and no less adventurous band of conspirators had landed meanwhile under the cliffs of Normandy. The d'Hauteserres and Simeuses, disguised as laborers, had come on foot from forest to forest, guided from place to place by helpers chosen by Laurence herself. During the past three months she had found out the most devoted partisans of the Bourbons among those least liable to suspicion. The *émigrés* slept all day and marched at night. Each one had brought two devoted soldiers; one of these was sent on ahead, and another left behind to cover the retreat in case of disaster. Thanks to these military dispositions, the dear detachment had reached the Forest of Nodesme, their trysting-place, in safety. Another band of twenty-seven gentlemen came at the same time by way of Switzerland and Burgundy, taking similar precautions. Altogether M. de Rivière counted upon five hundred men, one hundred of them being young nobles, the officers of the devoted band.

MM. de Polignac and Rivière, whose behavior as leaders was extremely remarkable, kept the number of their accomplices a profound secret; their names were never known. It may, however, be said to-day, after the revelations that were made during the Restoration, that Bonaparte no more suspected the full extent of the risk that he ran in those days, than England imagined the peril with which she was threatened by the camp at Boulogne; and yet, at no time was the police system more intelligently and efficiently worked. At the time of the opening of this story, one of the poltroons that will always be found in every conspiracy which is not confined to a little band of strong spirits, a single conspirator when brought face to face with death gave information, luckily insufficient as to the extent, but precise enough as to the objects of the attempt. For which reason the police, as Malin had told Grévin, had left the conspirators at liberty while they watched them closely so as to follow up all the

ramifications of the plot. Still the hand of the Government had been in some sort forced by Georges Cadoudal, an energetic leader who took counsel with no one but himself, and lay in hiding in Paris with twenty-five Chouans, ready to attack the First Consul.

Love and hate were blended in Laurence's thoughts. To make an end of Bonaparte, and to bring back the Bourbons,—what was this but to regain Gondreville and to make her cousins' fortune? Those two opposite feelings are sufficient to bring out all the powers of the soul and all the forces of life, especially at the age of three and twenty. Never before had Laurence looked so beautiful to the folk at Cinq-Cygne as she had done of late during the past two months. There was a red color in her cheeks; hope, at some moments, lent pride to her brows; and when the *Gazette* was read aloud of an evening, and they heard the First Consul's conservative policy therein set forth, she would lower her eyes lest any one should see her conviction that the fall of Bonaparte was at hand.

Nobody at the Château suspected, therefore, that the Countess had seen her cousins on the previous night. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre's two sons had slept in the Countess' own room, beneath the same roof with their father and mother; for Laurence, by way of precaution, admitted the two d'Hauteserres between one and two in the morning, and went to join her cousins, the Simeuses, in the forest, where they lay hidden in a deserted woodman's hut. She felt so sure of meeting them again that she showed not the slightest sign of joy, nor was there a trace of excitement or suspense in her manner; in short, she had contrived to efface the expression of the pleasure she had felt. She was quite impassive. Catherine, her foster-mother's pretty daughter, and Gothard were both in the secret, and followed their mistress' example. Catherine was nineteen years old. A girl of nineteen, like Gothard, is fanatical in her devotion; she will not utter a word with the knife at her throat. And as for Gothard, the rack would not have drawn a syllable from

him, after a breath of the scent that clung about the Countess' dress and hair.

While Marthe was gliding along like a shadow towards the gap of which Michu spoke when he warned her that danger was nigh at hand, the scene in the drawing-room at Cinq-Cygne was as peaceful as could be. The family were so far from suspecting that a storm was about to burst, that any one who had known their true position must have felt sorry for them. A fire was blazing on the great hearth beneath the pier-glass on the wall where the shepherdesses in paniers were dancing—such a fire as you only see in châteaux in a wooded country. And, by the fireside, in a great, square, gilded chair, covered with handsome silk damask, lay the young Countess, stretched at full length, as it were, in complete exhaustion. She had only come in at six o'clock, after riding as far as the Brie district, acting as scout till she saw her four nobles safely to the lair whence they were to make the final stage to Paris. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre had almost finished dinner when she came in; so, famished as she was, she sat down to table in her mud-stained riding-habit and thick shoes, and when dinner was over she felt too tired to change her dress after all the day's fatigue. Her beautiful head, with its thick, bright curls, was resting on the back of her large, low chair; her feet were stretched out on a footstool, the splashes of mud on her shoes and habit were slowly drying in the warmth of the fire. Her hat and gloves and riding-whip lay on the console table, where she had thrown them down.

Now again she glanced up at the Boule clock between the two flowery branched candlesticks on the mantel-shelf, and wondered whether the conspirators were in bed by this time; then again she looked at the card-table drawn up to the fire; Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre were playing their game of boston with the curé of Cinq-Cygne and his sister.

Even if these personages had not been embedded in the course of the story their portraits would still have this merit, —they give an idea of one of the positions taken up by the

aristocracy after their defeat in 1793. From this point of view, a description of the inmates of the drawing-room at Cinq-Cygne, may be regarded as history in dressing-gown and slippers.

M. d'Hauteserre, a tall, spare, sanguine man, aged fifty-two, enjoyed robust health, and might have seemed capable of vigorous action if it had not been for the excessively simple expression of his big, china-blue eyes. An altogether disproportionate space between the mouth and nose in a countenance terminated by a long, peaked chin, gave to that gentleman an appearance of meekness perfectly in accordance with his character, and every little detail of his appearance bore out this impression. His gray hair, for instance, felted by the pressure of the hat that he wore almost the whole day long, looked something like a skull-cap, completing the outline of a pear-shaped head. His forehead, deeply wrinkled by an out-of-door life and continual anxiety, was vacant and expressionless. A hooked nose lent a certain amount of contrast to his face; but the only signs of force of character about him were to be found in the bushy eyebrows, still black as ever, and a high-colored complexion. Nor was this a misleading trait; the country gentleman, simple and mild-tempered though he was, held to his monarchical and religious creeds, and nothing would have induced him to change either the one or the other. If he had been arrested, the good, easy man would have made no resistance; he would not have fired on the representives of the authority; he would have trotted off quite meekly to the scaffold. He would have "emigrated" if his whole income had not consisted of an annuity of three thousand livres; but as it was, he submitted to the government *de facto,* without faltering in his attachment to the royal family. He wished to see the Bourbons once more upon the throne, but he would have refused to compromise himself by taking part in any attempt to bring them back again.

M. d'Hauteserre belonged to that section of the Royalist party which could never forget that it had been beaten and robbed, and thenceforth remained mute, frugal, rancorous,

and inert. Incapable alike of forswearing their principles or of making any sacrifice for them; perfectly ready to hail triumphant royalty; friends of priests and religion, they made up their minds to endure all the buffets of adverse fortune. These folk cannot be said to hold opinions, they are merely obdurate. Action is the *sine qua non* of a political party. M. d'Hauteserre, loyal but unintelligent, close-fisted as a peasant, yet lofty in his manners; bold in his wishes, yet discreet in words and actions, turning everything to account and quite ready to act as mayor of Cinq-Cygne, was an admirable specimen of his class. He was one of those honorable country gentlemen upon whose foreheads God has legibly written the word "mite"; these stayed in their manor-houses while the storms of the Revolution passed over their heads, emerging under the Restoration rich with hoarded savings and proud of their non-committal attachment, only to return to their estates in 1830.

M. d'Hauteserre's costume was the expressive husk of his character; his dress portrayed the man and the time in which he lived. He wore the nut-brown greatcoat, with a narrow collar, brought into fashion by the last Duke of Orleans after his return from England; a kind of compromise between the hideous popular costume and the graceful overcoats worn by the aristocracy. A velvet waistcoat with flowered stripes, something after the pattern familiarized by Robespierre and Saint-Just, was cut low enough to display the beginnings of a little plaited shirt frill. He had not discarded the old-fashioned small clothes, but they were made of coarse blue cloth fastened with steel buckles. Black silk stockings clung to the outlines of a pair of stag's legs, and his heavy shoes were kept in place by black cloth gaiters. His throat was enveloped by the multitudious folds of a muslin frock, fastened by a gold buckle. The good man by no means aimed at expressing his political eclecticism in a costume in which peasant, revolutionary, and aristocrat were nicely blended; he had quite innocently bowed to circumstances.

Madame d'Hauteserre was a woman of forty, aged by

emotion; with a faded face that seemed always to be posed for a portrait; a lace cap adorned with upstanding satin bows contributed not a little to the solemnity of her air. She still wore powder in spite of her dress of a later period; a white kerchief, and a puce-colored silk gown with tight sleeves and a very full skirt, the last sober costume worn by Marie Antoinette. Her nose was pinched, her chin pointed, her face almost triangular, but she continued to put on the "suspicion" of rouge which lent brightness to the eyes that had shed so many tears. And she took snuff, omitting none of those little dainty precautions which the fine ladies of a previous age carried to the point of affectation; a host of small observances almost amounting to a rite, and all explained by a few words—Madame d'Hauteserre had pretty hands.

A Minorite abbé, Goujet by name, a friend of the late Abbé d'Hauteserre and tutor of the two Simeuses, had taken the cure of Cinq-Cygne for his retreat for the past two years, out of friendship for the d'Hauteserres and the young Countess. Mademoiselle Goujet, his sister, rich to the extent of seven hundred francs per annum, united her income to the curé's slender stipend, and kept house for her brother. Neither the church nor the parsonage had been sold because they were worth so little. So the Abbé Goujet lodged close by the château, for the parsonage garden lay on the other side of the park wall. Twice a week, he and his sister dined at the château, and every evening they came for a game of cards with the d'Hauteserres. Laurence did not know a single game.

The Abbé Goujet had a pleasant smile and a gentle, winning voice. His hair was white; his face, too, was white as an old woman's; an intelligent forehead and a pair of very keen eyes redeemed his almost doll-like countenance from insipidity. A well-made man of average height, he continued to wear the Frenchman's black coat, silver buckles at his knees and on his shoes, black silk stockings, and a black waistcoat with white bands, which gave him a certain grand air, while it took nothing from his dignity.

The abbé (he became Bishop of Troyes after the Restoration) had gained a considerable insight into the characters of young people in the course of his former life; he had divined Laurence's greatness; he fully appreciated her, and from the first treated the young girl with a respectful deference which contributed not a little to give her an independent position at Cinq-Cygne; the austere old lady and the good gentleman gave way to Laurence, instead of requiring obedience of her in the usual fashion. For the past six months the Abbé Goujet had been watching Laurence with that genius of observation peculiar to priests, the most perspicacious of all human beings. He did not know that this girl of three and twenty was thinking of dethroning Bonaparte, while her fragile fingers were twisting the loops of braid on her riding-habit; still he thought that some great purpose was fermenting in her mind.

Mademoiselle Goujet was a spinster whose portrait can be given in two words which will call up her image before the least imaginative mind. She was a woman of the big, gawky type. She knew she was ugly. She was the first to laugh at her ugliness, showing as she laughed a set of long teeth as yellow as her complexion and her bony hands. Mademoiselle Goujet was unfailingly cheerful and kind. She wore the well-known old-fashioned jacket, very full skirts, a pocket always full of keys, a cap trimmed with ribbons, and a false front. She looked like a woman of forty long before she reached that age, but she made up for it, as she said, by looking very much the same for twenty years together. Mademoiselle Goujet had a great veneration for the noblesse; she knew how to preserve her own dignity while rendering to noble birth its dues of respect and homage.

Their society was very welcome to Madame d'Hauteserre; unlike her husband, she had no out-of-door occupations, nor had she, like Laurence, a strong hatred to brace her to the endurance of a lonely existence. Life had grown in some sort bearable during the past six years. The Catholic Church had been re-established; there were religious duties to be

fulfilled (and these vibrate through life in the country as they never do anywhere else). The First Consul's conservative action reassured Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre; latterly they had been able to correspond with their sons, they had news of them in return. They need no longer tremble for their children, and begged them to make application to be erased from the List of *émigrés* and to come back to France. The Treasury had cleared off arrears and punctually continued to pay dividends quarter by quarter, so that the d'Hauteserres had rather more than their annuity of eight thousand francs. Old M. d'Hauteserre applauded his own sagacity and foresight. His savings for his ward, together with his own (some twenty thousand francs) had been invested in the Funds before the 18th Brumaire sent them up, as all the world knows, from twelve to eighteen francs.

For years Cinq-Cygne remained bare, empty, and desolate, M. d'Hauteserre having prudently determined to make no changes so long as the Revolutionary commotion lasted; but after the Peace of Amiens he went to Troyes to buy back some relics of the sack of the two mansions, from second-hand furniture dealers. Thanks to his pains, the drawing-room had been furnished. The six windows were adorned with handsome curtains of white silk damask with a green flower pattern, which once hung in the Hôtel Simeuse. The whole great room had been newly wainscoted with panels, each one framed in strips of beading, with masks by way of ornament at the corners, and the whole was painted in two shades of gray. Various subjects, in the gray cameo style in fashion under Louis XV., covered the frieze panels above the four doors; and the good man had found gilded console tables at Troyes, as well as a suite of furniture in green silk damask, a crystal chandelier, an inlaid card-table, and everything that might serve to restore Cinq-Cygne.

All the furniture of the château had been plundered in 1792, for the sack of the town houses was followed by a sack in the valley. Every time that M. d'Hauteserre went to

Troyes, he came back again with some few relics of ancient splendor; sometimes it was a handsome carpet, like the one which covered the drawing-room floor; sometimes it was a piece of plate, or old Dresden or Sèvres china. Six months ago he had ventured to dig up the Cinq-Cygne silver plate, which the cook had buried in a little house belonging to him, at the end of one of the straggling suburbs of Troyes.

This faithful servant, Durieu by name, and his wife, had always followed their young mistress' fortunes. Durieu was the man-of-all-work at the château, and his wife was housekeeper. Catherine's sister was kitchen-maid, and, under Durieu's training, was in a fair way to be an excellent cook, An old gardener and his wife, their son, a day laborer, and their daughter, the dairymaid, completed the staff of servants at the château. Six months since, La Durieu had secretly made a livery in the Cinq-Cygne colors for Gothard and the gardener's son, a piece of imprudence for which the old gentleman scolded her soundly; but she could not refuse herself the pleasure of having dinner served almost as it used to be in old times at the feast of St. Laurence, mademoiselle's patron saint. As for Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre and the Durieus, this slow, difficult progress of restoration was the joy of their lives, though Laurence used to smile at what she called childishness. But old M. d'Hauteserre took no less thought for substantial matters; he repaired buildings; reconstructed walls, put in a tree wherever there was a chance for it to grow, and made every inch of ground yield a return. Wherefore the valley of Cinq-Cygne regarded him as an oracle in matters pertaining to agriculture. He contrived to recover a hundred acres of land contested but not sold, and confounded with the common land by the commune. These he turned into artificial pastures for the cattle of the château, planting the meadows round with poplar trees, which had sprung up to admiration in six years. He purposed to buy back more land by and by, and to turn the buildings at the château to account on a second farm which he meant to manage himself.

So for the last two years, life had grown almost happy at Cinq-Cygne. M. d'Hauteserre was up and out at sunrise, looking after his men, for he was an employer of labor all through those times. He came in to breakfast, and afterwards made his rounds like any keeper on a farmer's nag; then returning to dinner, he finished off his day with boston. Every one at the château had his or her occupation; life in a convent was not more regular. Laurence was the only person who brought disturbance into it by her sudden journeys and absences from home; her "flights," as Madame d'Hauteserre called them. Nevertheless there were two parties at Cinq-Cygne, and causes of dissension.

In the first place, Durieu and his wife were jealous of Gothard and Catherine who lived in greater intimacy with their young mistress, the idol of the household. Then the d'Hauteserres, supported by Mademoiselle Goujet and her brother, were anxious that their sons and the Simeuses likewise should return to share the happiness of this peaceful life, instead of living in discomfort abroad. Laurence denounced this compromise as infamous. She represented pure, implacable, militant Royalism. The four old people had no wish to see prospects of a happy existence any longer in jeopardy, nor to risk the loss of the little nook of land won back from the torrent deluge of the Revolution. They tried to convert Laurence to their truly prudent doctrines, for they saw that her influence counted for a good deal in the opposition made by the *émigrés* to all proposals for a return to France. The guardians, poor things, were frightened by their ward's superb disdain. They were afraid that she was meditating some rash deed, and they were not mistaken.

This difference of opinion in the family had flashed suddenly out after the explosion of the infernal machine in the Rue Saint Nicaise, the first Royalist attempt upon the life of the conqueror of Marengo, after his refusal to treat with the House of Bourbon. The d'Hauteserres thought it a fortunate thing that Bonaparte had escaped the danger, quite believing that Republicans were the authors of the outrage.

Laurence shed angry tears because the First Consul was saved. Her despair got the better of her habit of dissimulation; she accused God of betraying the son of St. Louis.

"Ah!" she cried, "*I* would have succeeded!" Then seeing the unutterable amazement in their faces, she turned to the Abbé Goujet. "Have we not a right to make use of all possible means against a usurper?"

"The Church has been impugned and severely blamed by the *philosophes,* my child, because in former times she held that it was justifiable to turn a usurper's weapons against himself; and in these days the Church owes so much to M. le Premier Consul that she cannot but protect and guarantee him from the consequences of a maxim, due moreover to the Jesuits."

"So the Church forsakes us!" she had answered, with a dark expression in her face

From that day, whenever the four old people began to talk of submission to Providence, the young Countess left the room. And for some time past the curé (more adroit than the guardian) had ceased to discuss principles, and dwelt on the material advantages offered by the consular government; not so much with a view to converting the Countess, as to try to gain light upon her projects by watching the expression of her eyes at unguarded moments.

Laurence rode abroad more than ever. Gothard's frequent absences from home, Laurence's preoccupation, which in these last days rose to the surface and appeared on her face, a whole host of little things in short, which could not escape observation in the quiet, peaceful life at Cinq-Cygne, and certainly did not escape the anxious eyes of the d'Hauteserres, the Abbé Goujet, and the Durieus,—all this awakened the fears of Royalist resignation. But nothing seemed to come of it; the most perfect serenity prevailed in the political atmosphere for some days, and the little household in the château settled down into peace as before. Everybody thought that the Countess' passion for sport accounted for her wanderings.

It is not difficult to imagine the deep silence that prevailed

in the park and the courtyards and all about the château of Cinq-Cygne at nine o'clock at night. Everything and every one was so harmoniously colored, a deep peace brooded over the household, plenty had returned, and the good and prudent country gentleman had hopes of converting his ward to his theories of submission by a continuance of happy results. They were sitting over their boston, which game of cards was first invented in honor of the revolted American colonies; all the terms used in it recalled the struggle encouraged by Louis XVI., and the idea of independence became familiar to Frenchmen in this frivolous manner. But while the players scored their "independences" and "misères," they were watching Laurence.

Drowsiness soon overcame her; she fell asleep with an ironical smile hovering on her lips. Her last conscious thought had been of the party seated so quietly at the card-table, when two words from her, telling the d'Hauteserres that their sons had spent the previous night beneath their roof, would have struck the deepest consternation into all four of them. What girl of three and twenty would not have felt, as Laurence felt, proud to shape fate, and shared the faint stirrings of compassion which she felt for those so far beneath her?

"She is asleep," said the abbé. "I have never seen her look so tired."

"Durieu said that the mare was almost foundered," remarked Madame d'Hauteserre; "her gun had not been used. The cartridge chamber was clean; so she has not been out shooting."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" returned the curé, "that amounts to nothing."

"Pooh!" cried Mademoiselle Goujet, "when I was three and twenty and saw that I was doomed to be an old maid, I ran about and tired myself very much more. I can understand that the Countess may go about the country without any notion of shooting game. She has not set eyes on her cousins for twelve years; she is fond of them, very good;

in her place, now, if I were young and pretty, I should go straight into Germany. And perhaps she feels attracted to the frontier, poor, dear child."

"Mademoiselle Goujet, you are improper," said the curé smiling.

"Why, you are fidgeting over the goings and comings of a girl of three and twenty, and I explain it," said she.

"Her cousins will come back. She will be rich, and she will settle down in the end," old d'Hauteserre added.

"God send she may," cried old Madame d'Hauteserre, bringing out her gold snuff-box. (It had seen the light since Bonaparte became Consul for life.)

"There is news in the countryside," continued old d'Hauteserre, addressing the curé. "Malin came down to Gondreville yesterday evening."

"Malin?" exclaimed Laurence, awakened by the name, in spite of her profound slumber.

"Yes," said the curé, "but he is going back again to-night, and people are lost in conjecture over his sudden journey."

"That man is the evil genius of our two houses," said Laurence.

She had been dreaming about her cousins and the d'Hauteserres, and danger had threatened them in her dream. Her beautiful eyes grew wan as she stared before her and thought of the perils that they must encounter in Paris. She rose abruptly and went up to her room, the chamber of honor, with a dressing-room and an oratory situated in the tower nearest the forest.

Soon after Laurence left the drawing-room the dogs began to bark, somebody rang the bell at the gate, and Durieu came in consternation to announce, "Here comes the mayor! This is something fresh!"

The mayor, one Goulard, had once been one of the late Marquis de Simeuse's huntsmen. He used to come occasionally to Cinq-Cygne, and the d'Hauteserres considered it politic to treat him with a deference which the man valued highly. He had married a wealthy tradeswoman from

Troyes; his wife's property lay in the commune of Cinq-Cygne, and he himself had added to it by investing all his savings in the lands of a rich abbey. He and his wife lived like two rats in a cathedral, at the great Abbey of Val-des-preux, about half a mile away, a great place almost as stately as Gondreville.

"Goulard, you have been a glutton!" Mademoiselle said laughing, when she first saw him at the château.

The mayor was warmly attached to the Revolution, and the Countess received him coldly; but always felt bound by the ties of respect to the Cinq-Cygnes and the Simeuses, and for this reason he shut his eyes to much that went on there. He was blind to the portraits of Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette, the Children of France, Monsieur the Comte d'Artois, de Cazalès, and Charlotte Corday, which adorned the panels of the drawing-room; and deaf to wishes for the downfall of the Republic, or to scoffing at the expense of the Five Directors and other political arrangements of those days; and this he called "shutting his eyes." Like many other upstarts, he recovered his belief in the old families as soon as his fortune was made; he wanted to connect himself with them, and this position of affairs had just been exploited by the two personages whom Michu had so promptly recognized as spies. Corentin and Peyrade had made a survey of the district before they went to Gondreville.

The worthy described as the depositary of the best traditions of the old police, and Corentin, phœnix of spies, were in fact employed on a secret mission. Malin was not mistaken when he assigned a double part to that pair of artists in tragic farce. They were arms under the direction of a head which should perhaps be revealed before they are seen at their work.

When Bonaparte became First Consul, Fouché was the director-general of police. The Revolution had frankly and with reason made a special department of this branch of the service, but when Bonaparte came back after Marengo, he created a prefecture of police, installed Dubois as prefect,

summoned Fouché to the Council of State, and nominated Cochon (of the Convention, afterwards Comte de Lapparent) as Fouché's successor. Fouché regarded the office of Minister of Police as the most important of all in a government which took large views, and followed a definite political programme; he therefore took the change as a disgrace, or, at any rate, as a sign of distrust. Then came the affair of the infernal-machine and the plot which forms the subject of this history; and Napoleon recognized the fact that no man could be compared with Fouché in fitness for his office. Yet, later, the Emperor took alarm at the talents which Fouché displayed in his absence. After the Walcheren affair he made the Duke of Rovigo his Minister of Police, and appointed the Duke of Otranto to be Governor of the Illyrian Provinces, which practically meant that he sent him into exile.

Fouché's extraordinary genius, which struck a kind of dread into Napoleon, did not become apparent all at once. An obscure member of the Convention, one of the most remarkable and misjudged men of the time, he was formed in tempests. Under the Directory he reached an elevation whence profound natures can see the future by judging the past, and then quite suddenly, as a mediocre actor sometimes attains excellence with a flash of inspiration, he gave proofs of his skill during the rapid revolution of the 18th Brumaire. Slowly and silently this pale-faced creature—trained in monastic dissumulation, deep in the confidence of the Jacobin party, to which he belonged, and possessed of the secrets of the Royalists, to whom he went over at the last—had studied men and affairs and the interests at stake in the political arena. He divined Bonaparte's secret wishes and intentions, and gave him useful advice and valuable information. He had shown himself to be a man of resource, and useful to the government; and he was satisfied to do no more. He had no mind to make a complete revelation of himself; he meant to remain at the head of affairs; and Napoleon's uncertainty with regard to him gave him a free hand in politics. The Emperor's ingratitude, or, to be more accurate, his suspicion,

after the Walcheren affair, throws a new light on the character of the man; unfortunately for himself he was no *grand seigneur,* and he modeled his conduct upon that of the Prince de Talleyrand.

At this particular moment, not one of his former or present colleagues suspected the extent of his genius, a purely administrative, essentially departmental genius, accurate in all forecasts, and sagacious beyond belief. Any impartial historian must see, at this distance of time, that Napoleon's prodigious egoism was one of the many causes which brought about his downfall, a cruel expiation of his errors. In that suspicious sovereign, there was a certain jealousy of his new-born power, a jealousy which influenced all his actions at least as strongly as his private dislike of that group of able men (a valuable legacy left him by the Revolution) of whom he might have formed a cabinet to be the depositary of his thoughts. Others, beside Talleyrand and Fouché, aroused his suspicions. It is the misfortune of a usurper that he is bound to have two separate sets of enemies, those who gave him his crown, and those from whom he took it. Napoleon never wholly won sovereignty over the men who had been at first his superiors and afterwards his equals; nor, again, over sticklers for the rightful succession. Nobody felt that the oath of allegiance was binding.

Malin was a mediocrity; he was quite incapable of appreciating Fouché's dark genius; he did not distrust that quick comprehensive glance. So he singed himself like a moth in the candle flame. He went to Fouché to ask him in confidence to send some agents of police to Gondreville. He had hopes, he said, of throwing a light on the plot. Fouché was very careful not to startle his friend by putting any question to him, but he asked himself why Malin was going to Gondreville, and how it was that he did not communicate any information that he happened to have at once in Paris. The ex-oratorian, nurtured in dissimulation, and well aware that many members of the Convention were playing a double part, said to himself:

"How comes it that Malin knows something, when we as yet know next to nothing?"

Naturally, Fouché concluded that Malin was either implicated already or had designs of his own; but he was very careful to say nothing to the First Consul. He preferred not to ruin Malin, but to make a tool of him. This was Fouché's way. Most of the secrets that he discovered he kept to himself; he husbanded his power over people, and his power was even greater than Bonaparte's. This duplicity was one of Napoleon's grievances against his Minister.

Fouché knew that Malin had gained his estate at Gondreville by rascality; he knew, too, that Malin was obliged to keep on the watch for the Simeuses. The Simeuses were serving in the Army of Condé, and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne was their cousin. They might very likely be somewhere in the neighborhood; possibly, also, they were involved in the plot; and, if this were so, the House of Condé, to which they were devoted, was certainly likewise involved. Altogether, M. de Talleyrand and Fouché held it important to gain light upon this very obscure corner of the conspiracy of 1803.

All these considerations Fouché saw with swift lucidity of comprehension. But the relation in which Malin and Talleyrand stood to one another obliged him to proceed with the utmost circumspection, and therefore he wished to have the most complete information as to the interior of the château of Gondreville. Corentin was wholly in Fouché's interest, just as M. de la Besnardière was attached to Talleyrand, Gentz to Metternich, Dundas to Pitt, Duroc to Napoleon, or Chavigny to Cardinal Richelieu. And Corentin was not merely Fouché's adviser, he was his familiar, his *âme damnée,* a Tristan in secret to a Louis XI. on a small scale. It was therefore material that Fouché should leave him in the police department, so as to have an eye and a hand there. People said that the young fellow was related in some way to Fouché; that he was one of those connections which are never acknowledged; for Corentin's services were always

lavishly rewarded. Corentin had made a friend of Peyrade, a pupil trained by the last of the lieutenants of police; still he had secrets even from Peyrade. Fouché's orders to Corentin had been to explore the château at Gondreville, to have the whole place mapped out in his memory, and to discover every possible hiding-place.

"We may perhaps be obliged to go there again," he had said, exactly as Napoleon told his lieutenants to make a careful survey of the field of Austerlitz, on which he expected to fall back.

It was Corentin's task, besides, to make a study of Malin's behavior. He was to ascertain the man's influence in the district and to notice the kind of men in his employ. Fouché felt quite certain that the Simeuses were somewhere in the neighborhood, and by playing the spy discreetly upon two officers in high favor with Condé, Peyrade and Corentin might gain invaluable light upon the ramifications of the plot beyond the Rhine. In any case, Corentin had money, authority, and men sufficient to surround Cinq-Cygne and to put the whole district between the Forest of Nodesme and Paris, under the surveillance of a spy system. Fouché's injunction, however, was to proceed with the greatest caution; they were not to make the domiciliary visit to Cinq-Cygne unless Malin himself gave them positive information. Finally, as a part of his instructions Fouché had given Corentin an account of the inexplicable personality of this Malin whom he had watched for three years. Corentin's thought was in his chief's mind at the same time.

"Malin knows about this conspiracy! . . . But who knows whether Fouché is not in it too?" he added within himself.

Corentin set out for Troyes before Malin started; came to an understanding with the commandant of gendarmerie; chose out the most intelligent of the men and a keen-witted captain for their leader. To this captain, Corentin gave orders to divide his men in four groups of a dozen, and to post them after nightfall at four different points in the

valley of Cinq-Cygne. These groups, on picket duty, were to be placed sufficiently far apart, for fear of giving the alarm, and gradually to close in till they formed a square about the château.

When Malin went out for his conference with Grévin, he gave Corentin an opportunity of fulfilling one part of his mission. And when the State Councillor came back from his interview in the park, he stated so positively that the Simeuses and the d'Hauteserres were actually in the neighborhood, that Corentin and Peyrade despatched their captain on his errand. Very luckily for the gentlemen in hiding, the gendarmes went through the forest, by way of the avenue, while Michu was plying Violette the spy with drink.

Malin had begun by telling Peyrade and Corentin about the trap from which he had just escaped. The two men from Paris, thereupon, related the incident of the rifle. Grévin sent Violette down to the lodge to see what was going on, and Corentin asked the notary to take his friend to spend the night under his roof in the little town of Arcis, for greater security. So it happened that while Michu was galloping across the forest to Cinq-Cygne, Peyrade and Corentin started out from Gondreville in a shabby basket-chaise drawn by a post-horse, and the man who drove them was the constable of gendarmerie from Arcis, one of the smartest men in the force; they had taken him on the particular recommendation of the commandant at Troyes.

"The best way of getting hold of them is to give them warning," Peyrade remarked to Corentin. "Then when they are scared, and try to save their papers or to fly, we will drop down on them like a thunderbolt. When the ring of gendarmes closes in about the château, we shall have them in a net. We shall get them all in that way."

"You might send the mayor to warn them," suggested the constable. "He is well disposed to them; he does not wish them harm. They will not suspect him."

Goulard was just going off to bed when Corentin stopped the chaise in a little wood, and went alone to tell him (in

confidence) that in another minute or two a government agent would require him, the mayor, to give his assistance to surround Cinq-Cygne, and to seize MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre at the château. If these gentlemen had disappeared, it must be ascertained whether they had spent the previous night there. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's papers were to be searched, and probably the whole household would be put under arrest.

"Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne has interest with powerful persons, no doubt," continued Corentin, "for my secret instructions are to give her warning, and to do all that I can to save her, without committing myself. Once on the spot, I cannot act on my own responsibility; I am not alone. So hurry off to the château."

A visit from the mayor in the middle of the evening was the more surprising to the card-players because Goulard turned a perturbed countenance upon them.

"Where is the Countess?" he inquired.

"She has gone to bed," replied Madame d'Hauteserre.

The mayor lent an incredulous ear to the sounds above.

"What is the matter with you to-day, Goulard?" added Madame d'Hautserre.

Goulard looked around upon their faces; each one expressed that complete innocence which may survive to any age. He sank into the utmost depths of astonishment. At sight of the quiet, harmless game of boston interrupted by his entrance, the suspicions of the Paris police grew utterly inconceivable.

Laurence, meanwhile, in her oratory, was kneeling in passionate prayer for the success of the plot! She prayed to God to give help and strength to Bonaparte's murderers! The fanatical zeal of a Harmodius, a Judith, a Jacques Clément, an Anckarstroem, a Charlotte Corday, a Limoëlan inspired a pure and noble maiden soul. Catherine was turning back the sheets, and Gothard was closing the shutters; so that when Marthe Michu flung a pebble up at the window he saw her at once.

"Mademoiselle!" he called, at sight of the stranger, "something has happened."

"Hush!" whispered Marthe, "come and speak to me."

Gothard was down and out in the garden in less time than a bird takes to fly from the tree-top to the ground.

"The gendarmerie will be round the château in another minute. . . . Go and saddle Mademoiselle's horse; don't make any noise, and come round through the gap in the fosse between the stables and the tower."

Laurence had followed Gothard, and stood a couple of paces away. Marthe quivered at sight of her.

"What is it?" Laurence asked, simply and without a sign of discomposure.

"The plot against the First Consul is discovered," Marthe answered, lowering her voice for the Countess' ear. "My husband is thinking how to save your cousins. He sent me to ask you to come to speak with him."

Laurence drew back a step or two and looked full at Marthe.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"Marthe Michu."

"I do not know what you want with me," Laurence returned coolly.

"But you are sending them to their death! for the Simeuses' sake, come!' cried Marthe, falling on her knees and holding out her hands entreatingly. "Are there any papers here, anything that can compromise you? My husband, up yonder in the forest, saw the rims of the gendarmes' caps and the barrels of their guns."

Gothard had begun by scrambling into the loft. He saw the glitter of laced uniforms, and heard the sound of horse hoofs through the stillness. He dropped down into the stable and saddled his mistress' horse; Catherine, at a word from him, tied the animal's feet in linen bandages.

"Where must I go?" asked Laurence, for the unmistakable ring of truth in the words and the expression of Marthe's face had struck her forcibly.

"Through the gap," said Marthe, hurrying her along.

"That noble man of mine is there. You shall learn what a Judas is worth."

Catherine ran into the drawing-room, caught up her mistress' gloves, hat and veil and riding-whip, and went out again. Catherine's sudden appearance was such an eloquent commentary on the mayor's words that Madame d'Hauteserre and the Abbé Goujet, exchanging glances, read a horrible thought in each other's eyes. "Good-bye to all our happy life! Laurence is plotting against the Government; her cousins and the two d'Hauteserres are lost, and it is her doing!"

"What do you mean?" asked Madame d'Hauteserre, turning to Goulard.

"Why, the château is surrounded; you are to receive a domiciliary visit. In short, if your sons are here in the house, help to save them and the Simeuses."

"My sons!" cried Madame d'Hauteserre in bewilderment.

"We have seen nobody here," began her husband.

"So much the better!" returned Goulard. "But I am too much attached to the family of Cinq-Cygne and the Simeuses to bear to see any misfortune happen to them. Mind what I say—if you have any compromising papers——"

"Papers?" repeated old M. d'Hauteserre.

"Yes; if there are any, burn them," returned the mayor. "I will go and keep these people in play."

Goulard had a mind to hold with the Royalist hare and to run with the Republican hounds. He went out, and the dogs began to bark furiously.

"It is too late," said the curé; "here they are. But who is going to tell the Countess? Where is she?"

"Catherine did not come in for her hat and gloves and riding-whip to make relics of them," remarked Mademoiselle Goujet. For some minutes Goulard tried to gain time by assuring the two police agents that the people in the château of Cinq-Cygne knew nothing whatever about the matter.

Peyrade laughed in his face.

"You don't know those folk," he said, and with that the pair

entered the house. At sight of their ominously bland countenances and the constable from Arcis and the gendarme appearing behind them, the four peaceable boston players felt the blood freeze in their veins. They stayed in their places, appalled by such a display of force. Half a score of gendarmes were stationed outside, for the sound of horses pawing the ground reached them across the lawn.

"Every one is here except Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne," remarked Corentin.

"But she is asleep, no doubt, in her own room," said M. d'Hauteserre.

"Ladies, come with me," said Corentin. He sprang across the antechamber and up the staircase, Madame d'Hauteserre and Mademoiselle Goujet following him. Corentin turned to the older lady. "Count upon me," he whispered. "I am one of your own side. I sent the mayor to you just now. Beware of my colleague, and trust me, I will save you all!"

"But what is it?" asked Mademoiselle Goujet.

"It is a matter of life and death! Do you not see that?" Corentin replied.

Madame d'Hauteserre fainted. To Mademoiselle Goujet's great surprise, and Corentin's no less great disappointment, Laurence's room was empty. Corentin felt sure that no creature could escape out of the park or the château into the valley. Every issue was guarded. So he ordered up a gendarme into every room, instituted a thorough search through the stables and outbuildings, and went down again to the drawing-room. By this time, Durieu, his wife, and the rest of the household had rushed thither in a state of terrific excitement. Peyrade's little blue eyes scrutinized every face, he was the one cool and unmoved spectator of the commotion.

Corentin came down alone, for Mademoiselle Goujet was attending to Madame d'Hauteserre. As he came in, they heard the sound of trampling horses and the wail of a child. The horses came through the gateway; and in the midst of the general anxiety and terror, the constable appeared, push-

ing Gothard, whose hands were tied, and Catherine, before the agents of police.

"Here are some prisoners," said he. "This little rascal was on horseback, and ran away."

"Idiot!" muttered Corentin, to the bewilderment of the constable. "Why didn't you let them alone? We might have found out something by following them."

Gothard had decided to burst into tears in an idiotic fashion. Catherine's expression of artless innocence set the old agent of police meditating profoundly. Lenoir's scholar compared the boy and girl; he had already made a close scrutiny of the whole party,—of the intelligent curé, who was toying with the counters on the table, of the bewildered servants, and the Durieus. M. d'Hauteserre, with his simple countenance, he took for a very deep old gentleman. He went across to Corentin and said in a low voice, "We have not to do with fools."

For answer Corentin glanced significantly at the card-table. "They were playing at boston," said he; "the mistress of the house was going to bed; they have been taken at unawares; we shall have them fast directly."

A gap always has its uses; there was never a gap yet without a reason for it. Now for the why and wherefore of the breach between the stables and the tower that they call Mademoiselle's Tower to this day. At one time, the surface water of the forest had been drained off by a long gully into the castle moat. When old M. d'Hauteserre came to Cinq-Cygne, he turned the gully into a roadway across the uncultivated lands of the château, simply for the purpose of planting out some hundred or so of walnut saplings which he found in a plantation. That was eleven years ago. The walnut trees since then had grown tolerably thick, almost overspreading the lane which lay six feet below the banks on either side, and ended in a coppice about thirty acres in extent,—a recent purchase.

When every one was at home at the château, the whole

household preferred the short cut by the breach in the fosse, to the longer way round over the bridge to the communal road that followed the park walls. It was the nearer way to the farm; so, quite unintentionally, the gap was enlarged on either side, and with the less scruple because a fosse is utterly useless in the nineteenth century, and M. d'Hauteserre often talked of turning it to account. Earth, gravel, and stones were continually pulled down from the sides, until at last the bottom of the ditch was filled in, and a sort of causeway raised high and dry above the water, which only covered it in very rainy weather. Still, in spite of this dilapidation, in which the Countess herself did her part, the place was so steep that it was no easy matter to take a horse up through the breach, while the climb to the communal road was more difficult still; but it would seem that in danger a horse makes his master's thought his own.

While the Countess was hesitating to follow Marthe and asking for explanations, Michu, watching from his knoll, saw the moving lines of gendarmes, comprehended the spies' plan, and gave all up for lost, as no one came. A picket of gendarmes followed the park walls, and spread themselves out like sentinels,—one man just so far from the next that he could see him and hear him call. Not the least thing, not the faintest rustle, could escape them. Michu, lying flat on his stomach, with his ear close to the ground, calculated the time that remained, Indian fashion, by the loudness of the sound.

"I have come too late!" he said to himself. "Violette shall pay for this. What a time he took to get drunk! What is to be done?"

He heard another picket pass through the iron gate. Apparently the men had come from the forest, for another band came to join them by way of the communal road.

"Five or six minutes still left," he thought. And at that moment the Countess appeared. Michu's strong hands caught her and dropped her into the shaded lane. "Go straight ahead! Show her the way to the place where my horse is

standing," he added, turning to his wife, "and don't forget that gendarmes have ears."

Danger stimulated Michu's imagination. At sight of Catherine with the hat and gloves and riding-whip, he resolved to outwit the gendarmes as he had outwitted Violette, especially as Gothard came up just then with the mare; the boy had forced her to climb the gap as if by magic.

"Bandages on the mare's hoofs! I could kiss you," he cried, hugging Gothard in his arms. He left the animal to follow her mistress, and took the hat and gloves and riding-whip.

"You have your wits about you, you will understand me," continued he. "Force your horse up into the road. Ride bare-backed, trail the gendarmes after you, and run for your life towards the farm. Just draw off all this picket in a body," he added, waving a hand in the direction Gothard was to take. Then he turned to Catherine.

"As for you, my girl, there are some more gendarmes coming down on us from Gondreville. Off with you in the opposite direction, and draw the picket away from the château into the forest. In fact, manage so that we shall have no trouble with them here in the hollow."

Catherine and the remarkable child, who was to give so many proofs of intelligence in the course of this affair, both executed this manœuvre with such skill, that a line of gendarmes on either side believed that their prey was escaping them.

It was impossible in the uncertain moonlight to make sure of the sex, dress, or number of the fugitives, so the whole picket was soon in hot pursuit on the strength of the fallacious axiom that "any one who runs away ought to be stopped." The folly of this course in the higher branches of the detective service had subsequently been pointed out to the constable by Corentin in forcible language; but Michu had reckoned rightly upon the gendarmes' instinct. He was able to reach the forest some seconds after the Countess. Marthe had led the way to the spot.

"Run back to the lodge," Michu said to his wife. "The forest is sure to be guarded by the Parisians; it is not safe to stay here. We shall want all our liberty, I have no doubt."

Michu untied his horse as he spoke, and asked the Countess to follow him.

"I shall go no further," said Laurence, "unless you give me some pledge of the interest that you take in me. After all, you are Michu——"

"Mademoiselle," he said gently, "two words will explain the part I am playing. I am the MM. de Simeuse's trustee, all unknown to them. I took my instructions from my lord, their late father, and their dear mother, my patroness. So I have played the part of rabid Jacobin, to serve my young masters; unluckily I began the game too late; my old master and mistress I could not save."

Michu's voice faltered.

"Since the young gentlemen fled, I have sent them the money they needed to live as befitted their rank."

"Through the firm of Breintmayer, at Strasbourg?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, Strasbourg correspondents of M. Girel of Troyes. M. Girel is a royalist, but to save his property he turned Jacobin as I did. That paper which your farmer picked up one evening coming out of Troyes, referred to this business; it might have got us both into trouble, and my life was not my own but theirs. Do you understand? I could not get possession of Gondreville. They would have wanted to know where I got so much money, and, situated as I was, they might as well have cut my throat. I preferred to wait and buy later on; but the scoundrel Marion was acting for that other scoundrel Malin. Gondreville shall go back to its owners all the same. That is my affair. Four hours ago, I had Malin at the end of my rifle; oh, he was past praying for! Lord! once he was dead, there would be a compulsory sale, and you could buy the place. If anything happened to me, my wife would have brought you a letter that would have given you the means. But that brigand was telling his crony Grévin (another of the scum of the earth) that the MM. de

Simeuse were plotting against the First Consul, that they were in the neighborhood, and that it would be better to betray them and be rid of them so as to own Gondreville in peace. Now, as I had just set eyes on two arrant spies, I took the charge out of my rifle, and lost no time over coming here. I thought that you ought to know where and how the young gentlemen could be warned. That is all."

"You are worthy to be a noble," said Laurence, holding out her hand. Michu made as if he would kneel to kiss it, but Laurence stopped him.

"Stand up, Michu," she said, and something in her tone and look made him as happy at that moment as he had been unhappy for twelve years past.

"You are rewarding me," he said, "as if I had done all that I have yet to do. Do you hear those gallows-purveyors? Come, let us talk somewhere else."

Michu took the mare by the bridle and helped the Countess to mount.

"Give your whole mind to holding on tight," he said, "to using the whip, and steering clear of the branches that will slash you across the face."

For half an hour he led her at full gallop; they turned and twisted and went round and about to cut off the trail across the glades, till they reached a point where he stopped.

"I have no idea where I am," said the Countess, looking about her, "though I know the forest as well as you do."

"We are right in the middle of it," he answered. "There are two gendarmes after us, but we are safe."

The picturesque spot to which the bailiff brought Laurence was to play such a momentous part in the lives of the principal characters in the story (Michu included), that it becomes the chronicler's duty to describe it. And not only so, the place became famous in the judicial calendar of the Empire, as shall be shown.

The Forest of Nodesme once belonged to the monastery of Notre Dame. That monastery, seized, sacked, and demolished, disappeared entirely; neither monks nor lands re-

mained. The coveted forest became a part of the lands of the counts of Champagne, who afterwards pledged it and allowed it to be sold. In the course of six hundred years, nature covered the ruins over with her luxuriant mantle of lusty green, hiding them so effectually that nothing but a tolerably low mound overshaded by tall forest trees marked the spot where one of the finest of old convents once had stood. A dense thicket surrounded the place, and since 1794 it had pleased Michu to plant thorny acacias among the bushes. A pool below the mound indicated a hidden spring which doubtless determined the site of the convent in former times. Nobody but the owner of the title-deeds of the Forest of Nodesme could have traced the etymology of a word eight centuries old, or discovered that there had been a monastery in the woods in days of yore.

Just as the first mutterings of the thunder of revolution were heard, a lawsuit obliged the Marquis de Simeuse to refer to his title-deeds. These particulars chanced to attract his attention, and he began a search for the site of the monastery. It is easy enough to imagine the thought he must have had in his mind. The head keeper, knowing the forest well, assisted his master in the quest; and it was Michu's woodcraft which discovered the spot. He saw that there were five principal roadways, some of them almost undistinguishable in the forest; and he noticed that they all converged at this point, near the mound beside the pool. In former times they must have led from the monastery to Troyes, to the valley of Arcis, the valley of Cinq-Cygne, and to Bar-sur-Aube. The Marquis meant to make excavations in the mound, but he could not employ natives of the district on the work, and the pressure of circumstances compelled him to give up the idea. But the idea that the mound contained hidden treasure or the foundations of the abbey, remained in Michu's mind, and he carried on the archæological investigations by himself. Just at the level of the pool, between two trees at the foot of the one bit of steep bank, he found that the ground rang hollow under foot. Then one clear night he brought a pickaxe and worked

till he laid bare an opening into a cellar, and several stone steps.

The pool, only three feet deep at the most, was shaped like a spade, with the handle issuing from the mound. A spring apparently rose in the artificial rock of masonry, filtered away out of sight, and was lost in the vast forest. All the neglected wood paths, all the tracks of ancient roads and forest rides led to this marshy spot with its fringe of waterside trees, its ashes, willows, and alders. The water seemed to be stagnant, but it was always running under the broad-leaved weeds and cresses; for the whole green surface of the pool was scarcely distinguishable from its margin of thick, delicate grasses. So lonely was it that no animal save the wild creatures came to feed there. The mound was difficult of access; keepers and sportsmen were fully persuaded that nothing could exist below the marsh; so they never visited, searched, or sounded that part of the forest where the tallest timber grew under Michu's supervision till its turn should come to be cut down.

At the back of this cellar there was a clean, dry, and wholesome vaulted cell, built of freestone, something after the manner of that kind of conventual dungeon known as an *in pace*. The spring seemed to have been respected in the general demolition, for the cistern wall, built of brick and mortar such as the Romans used, was apparently of immense thickness; to which cause probably the wholesomeness of the place and the good condition of the steps were due.

Michu covered the mouth of the retreat with huge stones, and the better to keep the secret to himself, he made it a rule never to approach the place by way of the pool, but to climb the wooded mound and drop down from above.

When the two fugitives reached the spot the century-old trees that grew on the mound were tipped with bright silver by the moonlight; it played over the stately clusters among the glades that met about the spot, and the broad or narrow wedges of the woodland which ended sometimes in a clump, sometimes in a single tree. Your eyes were drawn irresistibly to

the glimpses of the distance down some curving path, by some black wall of leaves in shadow, or along a sublime, far-reaching vista of forest trees. The light, filtering down through the branches about the meeting of the ways, found the still water out of sight under the cresses and lily leaves, and lit a diamond spark here and there. The croaking of the frogs was the only sound that troubled the deep silence of this fair nook of forest, where the wild scents stirred thoughts of freedom in the soul.

"Are we really safe?" the Countess asked Michu.

"Yes, mademoiselle. But we have each of us something to do. Tie up the horses to the trees on the top of the bank, and muzzle them both," he added, holding out his neck handkerchief; "they are intelligent creatures; they will understand and keep quiet. When that is done jump down off the bank to the water's edge; take care not to catch your habit against anything, and you will find me below."

While the Countess hid the horses, and tied them up, and fastened the handkerchiefs over their nostrils, Michu cleared away the stones from the opening into the cellar. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne thought that she knew the forest thoroughly; she was amazed to the last degree to find herself under the vaulted roof. Michu put back the stones as skilfully as any mason. He had scarcely finished before the trampling of horse hoofs and the voices of the gendarmes rang through the still night air; nevertheless, he struck a light with much composure, kindled a bit of pine torch, led the way into the *in pace,* where he found an end of candle left behind after an exploring expedition. The iron door he himself had put into repair; though eaten through with rust in several places, it was nearly an inch thick and was bolted on the outside. An iron ring still hung from the wall, above the stone bench on which the Countess de Cinq-Cygne sank down, exhausted.

"We have a parlor to talk in," said Michu. "The gendarmes may go round and about as much as they like; if the worst comes to the worst, they will only take the horses."

"Take our horses," repeated Laurence de Cinq-Cygne. "If

they do, it might be the death of my cousins and the d'Hauteserres! . . . Let us see now, what do you know?"

Michu repeated the scrap of Malin's conversation with Grévin.

"They are on their way to Paris now! They are to reach Paris this morning!" said the Countess when he ended.

"It is all over with them!" exclaimed Michu. "There will be men at the barriers to watch every one who comes in or out of Paris, you may be sure. It is in every way to Malin's interest to allow my masters to compromise themselves hopelessly, so as to get rid of them."

"And I know nothing of the general scheme!" cried Laurence. "How can I send warning to Georges and Rivière and Moreau? Where are they? In short, let us think simply of my cousins and the d'Hauteserres, and overtake them, cost what it may."

"Signaled messages travel faster than the best horse," said Michu, "and of all the nobles deep in this plot, your cousins will be most thoroughly hunted down. If I can overtake them, they must be hidden here; we will keep them here till the affair is over. Their poor father perhaps had a vision of this when he set me on the track of the hiding-place; he had a presentiment that his sons would fly to it in danger."

"My mare was bred in the Comte d'Artois' stables. Her sire was his best English thoroughbred, but I have ridden her between eighty and ninety miles to-day; she would drop down dead on the road."

"I have a good horse," replied Michu. "If you have ridden between eighty and ninety miles, I should not have much more than forty to ride."

"Fifty-five," said she; "they were to be on their way by five o'clock. You will find them above Lagny at Coupvrai. They are to leave Coupvrai at dawn, disguised as boatsmen; they mean to enter Paris by boat. Here is the one token that they will believe," she continued, giving the broken half of her mother's wedding-ring. "I gave them the other half. The keeper at Coupvrai is the father of one of the men they have

with them; he found them a hiding-place in a charcoal-burner's hut in the woods. There are eight in all. My cousins have four men with them beside the MM. de Hauteserre."

"Nobody will run after the men, mademoiselle; let us look after the MM. de Simeuse, and leave the rest to do as they like about getting away. Is it not enough to give a call of 'Heads, oh'?"

"Leave the d'Hauteserres? Never!" she said. "They must all escape or all die together."

"Little country squires," objected Michu.

"They are only squires, I know," she said, "but they are connected with the Cinq-Cygnes and the Simeuses. So bring back my cousins and the d'Hauteserres, and take counsel with them as to the best way of reaching the forest here."

"There are the gendarmes! Do you hear? They are having a consultation.

"After all, you have been lucky twice already to-night. Go, bring them back, and hide them here in this hole. They will be quite safe. And I can be of no use whatever to you," she cried passionately. "I should be a beacon to give light to their enemies. The police will never think that they could come back to the forest when they see me stay quietly at home. And now the whole question is this," she continued, "how to find five good horses that will bring them from Lagny to our forest in six hours; five horses to be left dead in a thicket."

"And money?" asked Michu. He had been thinking intently as he listened.

"I gave my cousins a hundred louis, just now."

"I will answer for their lives," Michu exclaimed. "When once they are hidden you must give up any attempt to see them. My wife or my boy will take food to them twice a week. But I cannot answer for my own life; so I must tell you, mademoiselle, in case anything should happen, that in the cross-beam in the garret roof there is a hole bored by an auger, and stopped with a wooden plug. Inside there is a

plan of a bit of the forest. All the trees marked with a red dot on the plan, bear a black mark on them on the ground, and each one of those trees is a sign-post. Under the third old oak from each of the sign-post trees, two feet away from the trunk, and seven feet underground, there lies a tin canister containing a hundred thousand francs in gold. These eleven trees, for there are only eleven of them, are all the fortune left to the Simeuses now that Gondreville has been taken from them."

"It will take a century for the noblesse to recover from the blows dealt to them," Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne said slowly.

"Is there a password?" Michu asked.

"*France* and *Charles* for the men, and *Laurence* and *Louis* for the d'Hauteserres and Simeuses. O, God! to have seen them again for the first time after eleven years, and to know that they are in danger of death to-day, and what a death! Michu," she said, with a melancholy expression in her face, "be as careful during these next fifteen hours as you have been great and devoted all through the twelve years. If anything should happen to my cousins, I should die. No, not until I had killed Bonaparte," she added.

"There will be two of us for that," he said, "on the day when all is lost."

Laurence grasped Michu's rough hand in hers, and shook it in the English fashion. Michu looked at his watch. It was midnight.

"Let us get out at all costs," he said. "The gendarme that tries to stop me had better look out! And you, Madame la Comtesse, would it not be better for you to go back to the château at full gallop? They are there; keep them in play."

Michu unstopped the entrance, and heard nothing; he flung himself flat on the ground to listen, and then rose suddenly to his feet.

"They are on the outskirts of the forest near Troyes," he said; "I will give them leg bail."

He helped the Countess to climb out, replaced the heap of

stones. When he had finished, he heard Laurence's sweet voice calling to him; she wished to see him mount first. There were tears in the rough keeper's eyes as he exchanged a last glance with his young mistress, but Laurence was dry eyed.

"Let us keep them in play; he is right," she said to herself when the last sounds had died away. And she set out at a gallop for Cinq-Cygne.

When Madame d'Hauteserre knew that her sons' lives were in danger, the very violence of the anguish which stunned her brought her back to her senses and gave her strength. She could not believe that the Revolution was over; she had had experience of the summary justice dealt in times past; and a dreadful curiosity drew her down to the salon. The sight that met her eyes was in truth worthy of a painter of genre.

The curé was still sitting at the card-table, playing mechanically with the counters, while he kept a furtive watch on Peyrade and Corentin, who stood in the chimney corner talking together with lowered voices. Several times Corentin's keen eyes had happened to meet the curé's no less keen glances, but both of them promptly looked away, much as two equally matched fencers might fall back on guard after crossing swords.

Old d'Hauteserre, planted like a heron on his two feet, stood beside Goulard, the big and burly miser, whose attitude assumed in his first bewilderment was still unchanged. As for the mayor, though he dressed like a master, he always looked like a servant. Both men stared stupidly at the gendarmes, on either side of Gothard. The boy was still crying; his hands had been tied in such a rigorous fashion that they were purple and swollen. Catherine maintained her position; she was quite simple and artless and quite inscrutable. The constable, who according to Corentin had made a silly blunder by arresting these good little souls, was in two minds whether he ought to stay or go, so he stood absorbed in thought in the middle of the room, with his hand

on his sabre hilt and his eyes on the men from Paris. The bewildered Durieus and the group of servants made an admirable picture of anxiety. If it had not been for Gothard's sobbing you could have heard a pin drop.

All faces were turned towards the door when it opened and the mother appeared, white and terror-stricken, almost carried by Mademoiselle Goujet, whose eyes were red with weeping. The two agents of police hoped and the rest of the party feared to see Laurence enter with them. The spontaneous movement of the family, the servants included, might have been caused by some mechanical contrivance that sets a row of wooden puppets making one single gesture or blinking their eyes with one accord.

Madame d'Hauteserre made three hasty paces towards Corentin and cried out, in a broken but excited voice:

"For pity's sake, monsieur, of what are my sons accused? And do you think that they can be here?"

The curé, watching the old lady, lowered his eyes. "She will make a mess of it," he seemed to say to himself.

"My duty and the mission which I am fulfilling will not permit me to tell you that," replied Corentin, with satirical urbanity.

The young fop's odious affability made his refusal even more hopelessly emphatic; the old mother seemed to be turned to stone. She sank down into an easy-chair beside the Abbé Goujet, clasped her hands, and put up a prayer.

"Where did you find that cry-baby?" inquired Corentin, indicating Laurence's little squire to the constable.

"On the road to the farm along by the park walls; the rogue was making for the wood at Closeaux."

"And the girl?"

"She? It was Olivier that nabbed her."

"Where was she going?"

"Towards Gondreville."

"One going one way, and the other, another."

"Yes," said the gendarme.

"He is the Citoyenne Cinq-Cygne's page, and the girl is her maid, I think," said Corentin, addressing the mayor.

"Yes," answered Goulard.

Corentin and Peyrade held a brief, whispered conference on this, and the latter went out with the constable. The Arcis constable came in, and spoke to Corentin in a low voice.

"I know the premises well," he said. "I have made a thorough search through the outbuildings; there is nobody there unless the young fellows are buried underground. We have sounded all the walls and floors with our gun-stocks."

Peyrade came in, beckoned Corentin out of the room, took him to see the gap in the fosse, and pointed out the hollow way beyond.

"We have found out the dodge," said he.

"And I'll tell you what it was," said Corentin. "That little jackanapes and the girl put those stupid idiots of gendarmes on the wrong scent, so that the game got clear away."

"We shall not know how things really are before daylight," returned Peyrade. "The lane is damp. I have posted a couple of gendarmes at top and bottom, to stop the way; and as soon as we can see, we will find out who it was that went that way by the footprints."

"There is the mark of a horseshoe here," said Corentin. "Let us go round to the stables."

"How many horses are there here?" demanded Peyrade, when they returned to the salon.

"Come, come, master mayor, you know; answer!" cried Corentin, seeing that that functionary hesitated.

"Why, there is the Countess' mare, there is Gothard's horse, and M. d'Hauteserre's——"

"We only saw one in the stable," remarked Peyrade.

"Mademoiselle has gone out," said Durieu.

"Does your ward often go out at night in this way?" asked the dissolute Peyrade.

"Very frequently," the old gentleman answered simply, "as M. le Maire can testify."

"She has her crochets, as all the world knows," put in Catherine. "She looked out at the sky before she went to bed; she saw your bayonets shining in the distance, I expect,

and that puzzled her. She told me when she went out that she wanted to know if there was another new revolution going on."

"When did she go out?" asked Peyrade.

"When she saw your guns."

"And which way did she go?"

"I do not know."

"And the other horse?" suggested Corentin.

"The g-g-gendarmes t-t-took him awa-wa-way from me," sobbed little Gothard.

"Then where were you going?" asked a gendarme.

"I wa-wa-was g-going after m-my mistress to the f-f-f-farm!"

The gendarme looked up as if he expected an order; but this kind of talk was so natural yet so artful, so profoundly innocent yet so shrewd, that again the men from Paris looked at one another as if to repeat Peyrade's dictum, "These are no fools."

The master of the house apparently had not wit enough to understand a gibe. The mayor was plainly a dolt. The mother, driven out of her maternal wits, was putting hopelessly silly questions to agents of police. All these people had really been surprised in their sleep. Corentin with all these little facts before him, weighed the characters of these divers personages, and at once came to the conclusion that his one real antagonist was Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne.

The detective, however clever he may be, labors under a great many disadvantages. Not only is he obliged to find out all that the conspirator knows already, but he is further bound to invent hypotheses by the hundred until he chances upon the right one. A conspirator is always thinking of his safety, while the detective is only on the alert at certain times. If it were not for traitors conspiracy would be the easiest thing in the world. A conspirator has more ingenuity in his single head than the whole body of detectives with all their immense resources in action. Corentin and Peyrade felt that they were pulled up, mentally speaking. They had

been driven, as it were, to pick a lock instead of finding an open door, and now discovered that several persons on the other side were silently leaning all their weight against it. Corentin and Peyrade saw that some one had guessed their plans and outwitted them; but who this was they did not know.

"If the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre spent the night here," the Arcis constable said in a low voice, "I will be bound that they either slept in the beds belonging to their father and mother, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the servants, or else they tramped up and down in the park all night, for there is not the slightest sign to show that they have been here."

"Then who can have given them warning?" Corentin asked turning to Peyrade. "Nobody knows anything yet, except the First Consul and Fouché, the Prefect of Police, the Ministers, and Malin."

"We will leave some *sheep* in the neighborhood," whispered Peyrade.

"And that so much the better because your sheep will be in Champagne,"* said the curé; he could not help smiling when he heard that word *sheep,* and guessed all that was meant by it.

"Dear me," thought Corentin, smiling back at the curé, "there is one intelligent man here. I may arrive at an understanding with him; I will have a try."

But the mayor meant at all events to give some proof of his zeal for the First Consul; he addressed himself to Fouché's agents.

"Gentlemen——"

"Say citizens; the Republic is still in existence," suggested Corentin, with a satirical smile at the curé.

"Citizens," began the mayor, "just as I came into this room and before I could open my mouth, Catherine came flying in for her mistress' hat and gloves and riding-whip."

*An allusion to the saying, *Quatre-vingt-dix-neuf moutons et un Champenois font cent bêtes.*

For the French word *mouton* in its sense of police spy, no English equivalent exists.—Tr.

A low murmur of disgust came from the depths of every chest save Gothard's. All eyes, save the eyes of the police agents, flashed fire and threatenings at Goulard the informer.

"Good Citizen Mayor," said Peyrade, "we see through this perfectly well. Somebody gave the Citizeness Cinq-Cygne a very timely warning," he added, eyeing Corentin with evident distrust.

"Constable, put handcuffs on the little chap," said Corentin, "and shut him up alone. Lock up this little girl, too," he added, pointing to Catherine.—"You will superintend the search of the papers, now," he continued, turning to Peyrade. He lowered his voice to say a few words, and then added aloud, "Search through them all, spare nothing.—M. l'Abbé," he continued, "I have an important communication to make." He led the way into the garden. "M. l'Abbé, you seem to me to have all the wit of a bishop, and—nobody can overhear us—you will understand me, my one hope is in you. Here are two families brought by some foolish blunder to the brink of a precipice from which no one comes back if he once falls over. The MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre have been betrayed by one of the vile informers insinuated into every plot by the Government, so as to make sure of the methods employed, the people involved in it, and their object. Do not confuse me with the wretch, my companion; he is a mere detective, while I have the last word of the consular cabinet to which I am very honorably attached. It is not desired that the MM. de Simeuse should be ruined; Malin might like to see them shot, but the First Consul wishes to stop them on the brink of the precipice (if they are here, that is, and if they have no criminal designs), for he has a liking for a good soldier. My fellow agent has all the power; I, in appearance, am nobody, but I know how the land lies. Malin has given him a hint, has promised to use his influence, no doubt, to get him a place and money as well, very likely, if he can find the two Simeuses and give them up. The First Consul is a really great man; he has no sympathy with covetousness and greed.

"I have not the least wish to know whether the young men are here," continued Corentin, in reply to a gesture from the curé, "but there is only one way of saving them. You know the law of 6th of Floréal, year X.? It offers an amnesty to all *émigrés* still resident abroad, on condition that they return before the 1st Vendémaire of the year XI., which is to say, before the September of last year. But as the MM. de Simeuse and the MM. d'Hauteserre likewise have held commands in the Army of Condé, they are among the exceptions made by that same law. So their presence in France is a criminal offence; it will be taken, under the circumstances, as a sufficient proof of their complicity in a detestable plot. The First Consul has felt the weak point of the exception made by the law of the 6th Floréal; he sees that it makes irreconcilable enemies for his Government; he wishes it to be made known to the MM. de Simeuse, that no steps will be taken against them, if they address a petition to the proper quarter, stating that they have come back to France with a view to making their submission to the laws, and promising to take the oath to the Constitution. You can understand that this document must be in his hands before they are arrested; it should be dated a few days back; I can be the bearer. . . .

"I do not ask you where the young men are," he went on, as the curé shook his head again. "Unfortunately we are only too sure to find them. The forest is patrolled, the gates of Paris are watched, so is the frontier. Attend carefully to this that I am about to say! If the gentlemen are anywhere between the forest and Paris, they will be taken. If they are at Paris, they will be found there. If they turn back, the unfortunates will be arrested. The First Consul is well disposed towards *ci-devants,* and cannot bear Republicans; and this is quite natural. If he wants a throne he is bound to murder liberty first. This between ourselves. Now, see here! I will wait till to-morrow; I will be blind; but be on your guard with the agent. That damned Provençal is the devil's own lackey; he has Fouché's instructions just as I have mine from the First Consul."

"If the MM. de Simeuse are here," said the curé, "I would give ten pints of my blood and an arm to save them; but, if Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne is in their confidence, not the slightest word has escaped her, and she has not done me the honor to consult me. I swear it by my salvation. At this moment I am profoundly glad that she has kept her own counsel, always supposing that she had any counsel to keep. We were playing a game of boston to-night, as usual; the house was perfectly quiet until half-past ten; we neither saw nor heard anything. A child cannot come into this lonely valley but everybody sees and knows it, and for the last fortnight not a single stranger has been here. Now the MM. d'Hauteserre and de Simeuse make a party of four by themselves. The old gentleman and his wife have submitted to the Government; they have made every imaginable effort to bring their sons home; they wrote to them only yesterday. So, upon my soul and conscience, it took your descent upon us here to shake my firm belief that they are in Germany. Between ourselves, the young Countess is the only person in the house who fails to do justice to the eminent merits of M. le Premier Consul."

"Sly dog!" thought Corentin. Aloud he said, "If the young men are taken and shot, it will only be what they deserve. I wash my hands of it now."

He had walked with the abbé to an open space; the moon was shining down full upon them, and as he uttered those fatal words, he looked up sharply, full in his companion's face. The abbé was deeply distressed; but he seemed both surprised and wholly ignorant.

"Just remember, M. l'Abbé," Corentin went on, "that they are doubly criminal in the eyes of subordinates, because they have a right to Gondreville. In fact, I want them to pray to Providence, and not to the saints."

"Then there is a plot?" the curé asked naïvely.

"A base, hateful, cowardly plot, so contrary to the generous spirit of the nation that it will meet with reprobation on all sides," replied Corentin.

"Oh, well! Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne is incapable of baseness," exclaimed the curé.

"M. l'Abbé," returned Corentin, "look here. We have (this is still between you and me), we have unmistakable proof of her complicity, but not enough as yet to serve as evidence in a court of law. She takes flight as soon as we come. . . . And yet, I had sent the mayor to you."

"Yes, but you followed rather close upon the mayor's heels for a man that had it so much on his mind to save them," remarked the abbé.

The two men looked one another in the eyes. There was no more to be said. Both were deeply learned anatomists of human thought; a simple inflexion of the voice, an expression, a word was enough; they could guess the kind of man with whom they had to do, just as a savage knows his enemies by tokens invisible to European eyes.

"I thought I should get something out of him," thought Corentin, "and he has found me out."

"Oh, the scoundrel!" the curé said to himself.

The old church clock struck twelve as Corentin and the curé came back to the drawing-room. There was a sound as of opening and shutting chamber doors and cupboards. The gendarmes were pulling the beds to pieces. Peyrade, with a spy's quick intelligence, was ferreting and probing everywhere. The faithful servants of the family stood motionless as before, half terrified, half indignant at this raid. M. d'Hauteserre exchanged compassionate glances with his wife and Mademoiselle Goujet. A dreadful curiosity kept every one on the alert. Just then Peyrade came down with a box in his hand. It was a small, carved sandalwood box, that the Admiral de Simeuse must have brought from China,—a pretty, flat box, the size and shape of a quarto volume.

Peyrade beckoned Corentin to the window.

"I have it!" he said. "That Michu who could pay Marion a hundred thousand francs in gold for Gondreville, and wanted to kill Malin just now, must be the Simeuses' man. He threatened Marion and stalked Malin from the same

motive. He seemed to me to be capable of carrying ideas in his head; he has only one idea; he got to know how matters are, and he must have come to give the alarm here."

"Yes, Malin would be talking about the plot with his friend the notary," said Corentin, following out his colleague's reasoning; "and Michu being in ambush, no doubt would hear the Simeuses' name mentioned. In short, Michu only brought himself to postpone his chance of a shot at him, to prevent a calamity which seemed to him to be even greater than the loss of Gondreville."

"He saw quite well what we are," remarked Peyrade. "And it seemed to me, at the time, that that peasant's intelligence bordered on the marvelous."

"Oh! this proves that he was on his guard," replied Corentin. "But, after all, old man, we mustn't run away with the wrong idea. Treachery stinks prodigiously, and primitive folk smell it afar off."

"So much the better for us," rejoined the Provençal. Corentin called to a gendarme.

"Send in the Arcis constable," he said, adding to Peyrade, "Let us send down to the lodge."

"Violette is there; his ears are in our interest."

"We set out before we heard from him, though," said Corentin. "We ought to have brought Sabatier. Two of us are not enough."

When the gendarme came in, Corentin edged him in between himself and Peyrade.

"Constable," he said, "don't let them take a rise out of you, as they did just now out of the constable from Troyes. It looks to us as if Michu was in this affair. Go down to the lodge, take a look round, and report."

"One of my men heard horses in the forest, when they made prisoners of the lad and girl; and I have four stout fellows at the heels of those that might be trying to hide there," said the constable. He went out, set off at a gallop down the paved way across the lawn, and very soon the sounds grew faint in the distance.

"Come; they are either going towards Paris, or on their way back to Germany," said Corentin to himself. He sat down, took a note-book from the pocket of his spencer, wrote out two orders in pencil, sealed them, and beckoned to a gendarme.

"Ride off to Troyes full speed, wake up the prefect, and tell him to set the semaphore at work as soon as there is light enough."

The gendarme galloped off with the message. The meaning of this proceeding and Corentin's intentions were both so plain that the whole household felt something clutch tightly at their hearts; and yet the uneasiness was in some sort an added pang in their anguish, for their eyes were all fixed upon the precious casket. While the two agents spoke together, they furtively read the language of those blazing eyes; and their unfeeling hearts were moved to a sort of cold anger; they enjoyed the consternation about them.

The sensations of the sportman and the detective are the same; but while the one exerts all the powers of body and mind to kill a hare, a partridge, or a buck, the concern of the other is to save a government or a prince, and to earn a large reward. And this sport, in which man is the game, is superior to all other sport by the whole distance that separates man from the brute. A spy, moreover, is fain to magnify his part by the greatness and importance of the interests at stake. A man has no need to meddle in such business to realize that there is as much passionate interest thrown into it as ever the hunter can put into the chase. As the two detectives gained a glimmering of the truth, their eagerness grew warmer, but their faces and eyes were indifferent and composed; their suspicions, thoughts, and plan of action were impenetrable as ever. Yet for any one who could have watched these two sleuth-hounds at their work, who could have seen the way in which they tracked down unknown and concealed facts, and have understood the swift, canine instinct which led them to find the truth after a rapid survey of probabilities, there was something, I say, in all this to make one shudder.

How and why had these men of genius fallen so low, when they might have been so high? What flaw, what defect, what passion was it that had so debased them? Is a man a detective, as others are thinkers, writers, statesmen, painters, commanders on the battle-field, on condition that he shall do nothing but play the spy, just as other men do nothing but speak, write books, govern, paint, or fight, all their lives long? At the château there was but one wish in the hearts of the household,—"Will not thunder fall upon these wretches?" Every creature thirsted for revenge. But for the presence of the gendarmes there would have been an outbreak.

"Nobody has the key of the box," suggested the cynical Peyrade, giving an interrogative force to his remark by turning his great red face upon the company. He noticed as he did so, not without some inward quaking, that there were no gendarmes left in the room. Corentin and he were alone.

Corentin drew a small dagger from his pocket and proceeded to force it under the lid of the box. Even as he did so, they heard the sound of a horse galloping first on the road, afterwards on the paved way across the lawn; it was the terrible sound of a horse at the last gasp, succeeded by the far more dreadful moan, as the animal fell in a heap at the foot of the central turret.

The rustle of a riding-habit was followed by the appearance of Laurence herself, and in a moment the servants stood aside to right and left to allow her to pass. If a thunderbolt had fallen in their midst there could not have been more commotion. Quickly as she had ridden, she had had time to feel the pain that the discovery of the conspiracy must inevitably cause her. All her hopes were wrecked. She had galloped across the ruins of them, thinking all the while that there was nothing for it now but submission to the consular government; and if she had not quelled fatigue and exhaustion with the thought of the four nobles in peril of their lives she would have sunk fainting to the ground. She had all but killed her mare to come back to stand between her cousins and death.

At the sight of the heroic girl with the veil put back from her white, drawn face, and her riding-whip in her hand, every one knew by an almost imperceptible twitch of Corentin's sour, troubled countenance that now the real antagonists were face to face. A dreadful duel was about to begin.

The Countess saw Corentin with the box in his hands; raising her riding-whip she sprang at him so quickly and slashed him so sharply over the hands that the casket dropped to the ground. She snatched it up, flung it into the fire, and stood with her back to the hearth in a defiant attitude before the agents of police could recover from their surprise. Scorn blazed in Laurence's eyes; her white forehead and disdainful lips expressed more of insult than even her autocrat's action as she spurned Corentin for a venomous reptile. The chivalrous instinct was roused in old d'Hauteserre; all the blood rushed into his face; he wished that he had his sword at his side. The servants at first thrilled with joy; the vengeance so long invoked had fallen like a thunderbolt on one of these men; but a hideous fear soon thrust the joy down into the depths of their souls. They could still hear the gendarmes coming and going in the attics overhead.

The *spy*,—for all distinctions among agents of police are confounded and labeled with one vigorous epithet by a public that has never cared to find separate names to suit the various practitioners of a leech-craft indispensable to governments,—the spy has something about him that is magnificent and curious; he never resents anything. His is the Christian humility of the priest; his eyes are used to bear scorn; he raises, as it were, a barrier between himself and the multitude of fools that do not understand him. Insults he meets with brows of brass; he moves to his goal like some creature encased in a shell that nothing short of a cannon-ball can pierce; and, like his prototype of the carapace, he is the more furious when wounded because he believed himself secure in his armor. For Corentin that slash across the fingers, quite apart from the pain, was like the cannon-ball crashing through the carapace; the gesture, fraught with the loathing of a noble and heroic

girl, humiliated him not merely in the eyes of the onlookers, but even in his own.

Peyrade, the Provençal, sprang towards her. Laurence spurned him, but he caught her by the foot and forced her in that undignified fashion back into the low chair where she had lain asleep only a few hours ago. It was a bit of burlesque in the midst of terror, that touch of incongruity which is seldom wanting in human life. Peyrade scorched his hand as he snatched the box from the fire, but he took possession of the thing, dropped it on the floor and sat down upon it. The little events followed in swift succession, without a word. Corentin, recovered from the smarting sensation of the blow, held Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne down by the wrists.

"Do not oblige me to use force to you, fair citoyenne," he remarked, with withering courtesy.

Peyrade, sitting on his prize, had stifled out the flames.

"Here, men!" he called, still squatting in his odd position.

"Will you promise to behave yourself?" said Corentin, insolently addressing Laurence while he put up his dagger. He did not make the mistake of threatening her.

"The secrets in the box do not concern the Government," said she, with a touch of melancholy in her face and tone. "When you have read those letters, vile as you are, you will feel ashamed to have read them. . . . But have you any sense of shame still left?" she added after a pause.

The curé glanced at Laurence. "For God's sake, calm yourself!" he seemed to say.

Peyrade got up from the floor. The bottom of the box had been almost burnt out on the coals; it had left a scorched mark on the carpet. The lid was almost reduced to charcoal by this time; the sides gave way; and this grotesque Scævola, who had just sacrificed the seat of his apricot-colored breeches to the deity of detectives, opened out the casket as if it had been a book. Three letters and two locks of hair slid down upon the baize of the card-table. Peyrade was about to smile significantly at Corentin when he saw that both the locks of hair were almost white. Corentin turned away from Made-

moiselle de Cinq-Cygne, picked up one of the letters, and began to read it.

Laurence also rose and stood beside the agents at the table.

"Oh! read it aloud," she said; "that shall be your punishment."

And as they continued to read to themselves, Laurence herself took up the third letter and began:

"Dear Laurence,—My husband and I have heard of your noble behavior on that sad day of our arrest. We know that you love our two darling sons both equally dearly and as much as we love them ourselves, so we are entrusting you with a legacy both sad and dear to them. *M. l'Exécuteur* has just cut off our hair, for we are to die in a very few minutes, and he has promised to give these, the only keepsakes that we can give our dearly loved orphans, into your hands. So keep these locks of our hair to give to them in better days. A last kiss and our blessing goes with each. Our last thought will be of our sons, and then of you, and afterwards of God. Love them dearly, Laurence.

"Berthe de Cinq-Cygne.
"Jean de Simeuse."

There were tears in all eyes when the letter had been read.

Laurence turned a stony gaze upon the two agents, and spoke without a tremor in her voice:

"You have been less merciful than *M. l'Exécuteur!*"

Corentin quite composedly took the letter, put the locks of hair inside it, and laid it aside on the table with a heap of counters on the top as a paper-weight. There was something dreadful in the man's coolness amid the general emotion. Peyrade unfolded the other sheets.

"Oh! as to those," said Laurence, "they are almost alike. You heard the will read, now you shall see how it was carried into effect. After this my heart will have no secrets left; this is all.

"ANDERNACH, 1794,
"*Before the battle.*

"MY DEAR LAURENCE,—I shall love you so long as I live, and I want you to know this for certain; but you ought to know in case I should fall, that Paul Marie loves you as I love you. My one comfort if I fall will be the thought that some day you may take this dear brother of mine for your husband, and I shall not be eaten up with jealousy as I certainly should be if that should happen while we both were alive. After all, it seems to me very natural that you should like him better, for perhaps he is more worthy than I am . . . . and so forth.

"MARIE PAUL."

"Here is the other," she went on, while a charming color flushed her forehead.

"ANDERNACH,
"*Before the battle*

"MY KIND LAURENCE,—There is a tinge of sadness in my nature; but Marie Paul is so bright and happy that you must care far more for him than for me. Some day, perhaps, you will be obliged to choose between us; well, then—though I love you passionately . . . ."

"You have been in correspondence with *émigrés*," broke in Peyrade, and by way of precaution he held up the letters to the light to see if anything were written in sympathetic ink between the lines.

"Yes," said Laurence, folding up the precious letters, yellowed by time. "But what right have you to force an entrance into my house, to violate the liberty of the subject and all the sacred rights of the hearth?"

"Ah, indeed!" said Peyrade. "What right? You shall be informed, fair aristocrat." He drew from his pocket, as he spoke, an order from the Minister of Justice, countersigned by the Minister of the Interior. "Look you here, citoyenne, the Ministers have taken a notion into their heads——"

"We might ask you what right you have to harbor assassins of the First Consul," said Corentin, lowering his voice for her ear. "When you struck me just now with your riding-whip, you gave me a right to strike a blow in my turn to despatch my lords your cousins—when I had come to save them."

The curé, watching them, knew what was said by the expression of Laurence's eyes, and the movement of the lips of the great unknown actor; he made a sign to Laurence to beware. Nobody but Goulard saw the gesture. Peyrade was tapping the bottom of the box to see if it was hollow.

"Ah, God!" cried Laurence, snatching away the lid, "do not break it. Wait!"

She took a pin and pressed it against one of the figures; a spring gave way, the lid came in two, and disclosed two ivory miniatures painted in Germany: the portraits of the Simeuses in the uniforms of the Army of Condé. Corentin, thus confronted by an adversary worthy of his anger, withdrew into a corner with Peyrade. There was a whispered conference.

"And you threw *that* on the fire!" said the Abbé Goujet, looking at the old Marquise's letters and the locks of hair.

For all answer Laurence shrugged her shoulders significantly. The curé knew that she had made this supreme sacrifice to keep the spies in play and gain time. He raised his eyes in admiration.

"But where can they have caught Gothard? I can hear him crying," she added, loud enough to be heard.

"I do not know," said the curé.

"Had he gone to the farm?"

"Farm!" repeated Peyrade. "Let us send somebody there."

"No," returned Corentin; "that girl would not have trusted her cousins' lives to a tenant. She is amusing us. Do as I tell you. We made a blunder when we came here; we will at least find out something before we go."

Corentin went and stood with his back to the fire, and raised his long, pointed coat-tails to warm himself. From

his manner, look, and tone, he might have been there on a visit.

"Ladies, you may retire to bed, and the servants likewise. M. le Maire, your services are no longer required. We acted upon strict orders, and could not do otherwise than we have done; but when all the walls, which are very thick, it seems to me, have been examined, we shall go."

The mayor took leave of the company and went. Neither the curé nor Mademoiselle Goujet stirred, and the servants were too anxious not to stay and see what happened to their mistress. Ever since Laurence came into the room, Madame d'Hauteserre, with a despairing mother's curious gaze, had been poring on the girl's face. Now she took Laurence by the arm, and drew her into a corner, murmuring, "Have you seen them?"

"How could I have allowed your sons to come under our roof without your knowledge?" returned Laurence. "Durieu," she added, "go and see if it is possible to save my poor Stella; she is still breathing."

"Has she been ridden far?" asked Corentin.

"Thirty-seven miles in three hours," said Laurence, addressing her remark to the curé, who gazed at her in dull amazement. "I went out at half-past nine, and it was after one o'clock when I came in."

She looked at the clock as she spoke. It was then half-past two.

"Then you do not deny that you have ridden thirty-seven miles?" remarked Corentin.

"No," said she. "I admit that my cousins and the MM. d'Hauteserre, in their perfect innocence, meant to make application to be included in the amnesty, and they were on their way back to Cinq-Cygne. So as soon as I had reason to believe that the Sieur Malin meant to implicate them in some treasonable plot, I went to warn them to return to Germany. They will be safely across the frontier before the message can be signaled from Troyes to stop them. If this was a crime, let me be punished for it."

Laurence's reply had been well thought out; it was so plausible in every respect that Corentin was staggered by it. The Countess watched the agent out of the corner of her eye. Just at this critical moment, when all souls were hanging as it were upon the two faces, and all eyes went from Laurence to Corentin, and from Corentin to Laurence, the sound of a galloping horse reached them from the forest. It grew nearer and nearer, till the rider crossed the bridge and the paved way across the lawn. There was a look of ghastly dread in every face.

It was Peyrade who came in, his face radiant with delight. He hurried to his colleague, and said, loud enough for the Countess to overhear him:

"We have got Michu!"

Anguish, physical exhaustion, and the strain upon every mental faculty had brought the red color to Laurence's cheeks; now she grew white once more, and fell, as if thunder-stricken, half fainting into a chair. La Durieu, Mademoiselle Goujet, and Madame d'Hauteserre sprang towards her. She gasped for breath. She signed to them to cut the loops of braid that fastened her riding-habit.

"She was taken in by it. . . . They are on the way to Paris!" said Corentin, conferring with Peyrade. "Let us change the orders."

The pair went out, leaving a gendarme on guard at the door. Their diabolical ingenuity had won them a cruel advantage in this duel; they had ensnared Laurence by a common artifice.

At six o'clock in the morning, with the first gray light, the agents of police came back again. They had explored the hollow lane, and convinced themselves that horses had taken the way into the forest. The château was guarded by gendarmes under a constable's order, while they went off to breakfast at the little wine-shop in the village of Cinq-Cygne; but not before orders had been given that Catherine, persistently stolid and silent, and Gothard, who replied to every question by an outbreak of tears, should both be set at liberty.

Catherine and Gothard came into the drawing-room, where Laurence was lying in the great low chair, and kissed their mistress' hands. Durieu came in a while to say that Stella was out of danger, though her condition needed great care.

The mayor, fidgety and inquisitive, met Peyrade and Corentin in the village. He could not allow government officials of so high a rank to breakfast in a wretched village wine-shop, and brought them home. The Abbey lay about half a mile away, and on the road thither Peyrade bethought himself that the Arcis constable had not succeeded in bringing any news of Michu or Violette.

"We have no common people to deal with," remarked Corentin. "They are too clever for us. The priest has a hand in it, no doubt."

Madame Goulard had just brought her guests into the vast, fireless dining-hall, when the lieutenant arrived with a scared face.

"We have just come across the Arcis constable's horse, riderless in the forest," he told Peyrade.

"Run round to Michu's lodge, lieutenant!" cried Corentin. "Find out what is going on there. Perhaps they have killed the constable."

This news spoiled the mayor's breakfast. Huntsmen eating at a halting-place could not have bolted their provisions more rapidly than the two Parisians; and the meal over, they drove back to the château in their basket-chaise with the post-horse, so as to bear down as quickly as possible upon any point, as it might prove necessary.

When they entered the drawing-room whither they had suddenly brought trouble and dismay and sorrow, and the most cruel anxiety, they found Laurence, in a loose wrapper, old M. d'Hauteserre and his wife, and the Abbé Goujet and his sister, all seated about the fire, and to all appearance, quiet in their minds.

"If they had really caught Michu they would have brought him in," Laurence had said to herself. "It is mortifying to think that I lost my self-command, and threw a light on

those wretches' suspicions; but all can be put right again. Are we going to be your prisoners for long?" she asked aloud, with a satirical, careless air.

The two spies exchanged glances.

"How can she know something of our uneasiness about Michu? Nobody outside could get into the château. She is making fools of us," their looks seemed to say.

"We shall not trouble you with our presence much longer," returned Corentin. "In three hours' time we will make our apologies for disturbing your solitude."

Nobody answered him. The contemptuous silence exasperated Corentin's inward fury. Laurence and the abbé, the two intellects of this little group, had exchanged views of Corentin to their mutual edification. Catherine and Gothard set the table by the fire, and the curé and his sister joined the family at breakfast. Neither they nor their servants paid the slightest attention to the spies, and Corentin and Peyrade walked up and down in the gardens, in the court, and along the road, returning now and again to the drawing-room.

At half-past two o'clock the lieutenant put in an appearance.

"I have found the constable," he reported to Corentin; "he was lying on the road between the Cinq-Cygne lodge, as they call it, and Bellache. He had no wound except a frightful cut on the head; it looked as if he had got it with that fall. He was knocked backwards off his horse so suddenly that he cannot explain how it happened, he says. His feet slipped out of the stirrups or he would have been dead by now; his horse took fright and might have dragged him along the ground. We left him in charge of Michu and Violette——"

"What! Is Michu at the lodge?" asked Corentin, watching Laurence as he spoke. The Countess smiled shrewdly to herself, a woman's retaliation.

"He and Violette began bargaining last night, and when I saw him they were near the finish," said the lieutenant. "They were both of them a bit flustered, it seemed to me, and no wonder; they have been making a night of it together and have not managed to hit it off yet."

"Did Violette tell you so?" cried Corentin.

"Yes."

"Ah! if you want a thing done you must do it yourself!" said Peyrade, looking at Corentin, who seemed to share his poor opinion of the lieutenant's intelligence, and nodded assent to his serious remark.

"When did you reach Michu's place?' asked Corentin. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne had glanced at the clock, and this fact had not been lost upon him.

"Somewhere about two o'clock," the lieutenant replied.

Laurence included Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, the Abbé Goujet and his sister in one glance, that seemed to envelop them in a mantle of blue light; the joy of triumph glittered in her eyes; there was color in her cheeks, there were tears beneath her lashes. The girl that had been so strong to endure could shed no tears but tears of gladness. She was transfigured for them, especially for the curé; he had been almost vexed by Laurence's masculine strength of character; now he saw the woman's exceeding tenderness. Laurence's sensibilities lay like hidden treasure in some unfathomed depths beneath a block of granite.

A gendarme came to ask whether Michu's son was to be allowed to come in; he had brought a message from his father to the gentlemen from Paris. Corentin nodded. François Michu, a sharp boy, and a chip of the old block, was outside in the yard meanwhile; and Gothard, now at liberty, had time to exchange a word or two with him under the gendarme's nose. That functionary did not observe that the boy slipped something into Gothard's hand; and so little Michu accomplished his errand. Gothard stole in behind François, reached Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, and with an innocent air, gave her back both halves of the broken ring. Laurence kissed it with passionate fervor; she knew now that Michu had redeemed his word and that the four nobles were in safety. Meanwhile François was delivering his message.

"Dad wants to know what to do with the constable; he is in a bad way."

"What is the matter with him?" asked Peyrade.

"It's his head; he came a cropper though and no mistake. For a *gindarme* as knows how to ride a horse, that is bad luck, but he must have stumbled! There is a hole, oh! as big as your fist at the back of his head. Seems that it was his luck to come down on a nasty flint. Poor man! Much good his being a *gindarme* does him; he suffers all the same, till it makes you sorry to see it."

The captain from Troyes rode into the courtyard, dismounted, and beckoned to Corentin. Corentin rushed to the window and flung it open to save time.

"What is the matter?"

"We have come back like Dutchmen!" he said. "Five horses have been found ridden to death, hair stiff with sweat, right in the middle of the main avenue through the forest. I have had them kept so that we may find out where they came from and who supplied them. There is a cordon round the forest; nobody inside can get out now."

"When do you think these horsemen came into the forest?"

"At half-past twelve at noon."

"Don't let a hare leave unseen," said Corentin, lowering his voice. "I will leave Peyrade here, and go to see the constable, poor fellow, directly." Then turning to Peyrade, "Stop at the mayor's house; I will send a sharp man to relieve you," he added. "We must make use of the people hereabouts; notice all the faces there."

Then he turned to the company. *"Au revoir!"* he exclaimed, with an appalling ring in his voice. Nobody spoke or moved when the agents of police went out.

"A fruitless domiciliary visit! what will Fouché say?" exclaimed Peyrade, as he handed Corentin into the basket-chaise.

"Oh! all is not over," returned Corentin, in his associate's ear; "the Simeuses are sure to be in the forest."

Laurence was standing in one of the great windows of the dining-room, looking out at them through the small square panes. Corentin glanced significantly towards her.

"There was another once that was at least her equal," he said. "She stirred my bile too much, and I did for her. If this one falls into my power again I will pay her out for that cut with the whip."

"The other* was an adventuress," said Peyrade, "and this one is——"

"Does that make any difference to me? All are fish in the sea," said Corentin, with a sign to the gendarme to whip up the post-horse.

Ten minutes later the château was completely and entirely evacuated.

"How was the constable got out of the way?" asked Laurence of François Michu. She had food brought for him and made him sit beside her.

"Father and mother said that it was a matter of life and death, and that nobody was to come into the house. So I knew, when I heard horses going about in the forest, that I had to do with those beastly gendarmes, and I tried to keep them from coming to us. I brought down some thick cord out of our garret, and tied it firmly to a tree just at the opening of each way. And while I was about it I tied the cord high up so as to catch a man on horseback across the chest, and left the other end loose till I heard a horse come galloping down one of the roads. Then I made the end fast to the tree opposite, and the road was barred. It fell out all right. The moon had set, the constable came a cropper, but he was not killed. What can you expect? They are so tough, are gendarmes. After all, one does what one can."

"You saved us!" Laurence said, giving the child a kiss. She went with him as far as the gate, and then looking round to make sure that no one was near, she whispered, "Have they provisions?"

"I have just taken them a twelve-pound loaf and four bottles of wine. They will keep close for six days."

Laurence went back to the drawing-room. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, the Abbé Goujet and his sister, looked

* See *Les Chouans*.

at her with questioning eyes in which anxiety and admiration were equally blended.

"Have you really seen them again?" cried Madame d'Hauteserre.

But Laurence, smiling, laid a finger on her lips, and went upstairs to bed. When once the victory was won, weariness overcame her.

The shortest way from Cinq-Cygne to Michu's lodge was by the road from the village to Bellache; it debouched upon the circular space where the detectives first appeared to Michu, on the previous evening. The Arcis constable had come this way, and the gendarmes now brought Corentin over the same ground. The agent, as he went, was on the lookout for any trace of the means by which the constable was thrown out of the saddle. He rated himself for sending a single man to clear up so important a point, and drew an axiom from the experience to incorporate in a code which he was compiling for his own private use.

"If they put the gendarme out of the way," thought he, "they will have got rid of Violette as well. The five dead horses evidently brought back Michu and the four conspirators from the neighborhood of Paris. Has Michu a horse?" he asked, turning to the gendarme, who happened to belong to the Arcis contingent.

"Ah! yes, and a famous nag it is; a hunter out of the *ci-devant* Marquis' stables. Fifteen years old and only the better for age. Michu will ride thirty miles and more, and the animal's hide will be as dry as my hat. Oh! he thinks a lot of his horse; he won't take money for it."

"What is the horse like?"

"A dark bay, spotted with white about the feet. A thin animal, all muscle, like an Arab."

"Have you seen Arabian horses?"

"I came back from Egypt a year ago. I have ridden the Mamelukes' horses. You serve eleven years in the cavalry. I crossed the Rhine with General Steingel, then I was in

Italy, and I followed the First Consul in Egypt. So I shall be a corporal soon."

"While I am in Michu's lodge, just go round to the stable. If you have lived among horses for eleven years you ought to know when a horse has been ridden hard."

"There! that is where our corporal was thrown," said the man, pointing to the spot where the road emerged into the open space.

"Tell the captain to call for me at the lodge here, and we will go together back to Troyes."

Corentin alighted, and spent several minutes in observing the place. He scrutinized the elm-trees that stood on either side. One grew close beside the park wall, the other on the high boundary bank of the circle, which was intersected at this point by the cross-road. And at length Corentin saw something which every one else had passed over, to wit, a button lying in the dust, a button from a gendarme's uniform. He picked it up. As he entered the lodge, he beheld Violette and Michu sitting at the kitchen table. The dispute was still unfinished. Violette got up, made a bow, and offered Corentin some wine.

"Thanks. . . . I should like to see the corporal," returned Corentin. He saw at a glance that Violette had been drunk for more than twelve hours.

"My wife is nursing him upstairs," said Michu. Corentin sprang up the staircase, and found the gendarme lying on Madame Michu's bed, his head covered with poultices. The man's cap, sword, and shoulder-belt lay on a chair. Marthe, all unaware of her son's prowess, was true to her woman's instinct; she and her mother were nursing the wounded man.

"Well, corporal, how are you doing?" asked Corentin.

"M. Varlet, the Arcis doctor, is expected," Madame Michu replied. "Gaucher has gone to fetch him."

"Leave us a moment," said Corentin, feeling not a little surprised by this scene, for the women's innocence was obvious. "Where were you hit?" he asked, looking at the man's uniform.

"In the chest."

"Let us have a look at your shoulder-belt."

A yellow leather belt with white pipings formed part of the uniform of the "National Gendarmes," as they used to be called, a recent law having prescribed the costume and regulated it down to the smallest details. On the belt was a plate similar to the one at present worn by rural policemen, with the singular legend engraved duly upon it, "Respect individuals and property." The cord, of course, had left a deep score across the belt. Corentin took up the coat and found the place of the missing button.

"When did they pick you up?" he asked.

"Why, at daybreak."

"Did they bring you up here at once?" continued Corentin, noticing that the bed had not been slept in.

"Yes."

"Who brought you up?"

"The women and Michu's boy; he found me lying unconscious."

"Good!" thought Corentin to himself. "Then they were up all night. It is clear that the corporal was not knocked off his horse by a bullet, nor yet by a blow from a stick; for in that case the man that dealt the blow must have been on horseback and on a level with him. So he must have been disarmed by something put across the road. A piece of wood? Impossible. An iron chain? It would have left marks. What did you feel?" he asked aloud, scrutinizing the corporal as he spoke.

"I was knocked off so suddenly——"

"The skin is grazed under your chin."

"It seems to me that a rope sawed me across the face."

"I have it," said Corentin. "Somebody tied a rope across the road to stop you——"

"Very likely," returned the corporal.

Corentin went down into the kitchen.

"Come, old scoundrel, let us have done with it!" Michu was saying; he spoke to Violette, and looked at the spy. "A

hundred and twenty thousand francs in all, and my land is yours. I shall put the money in the funds and be independent."

"As there is but one God, I have only sixty thousand, I tell you."

"But when I offer you time for the rest! And here we have been bargaining since yesterday and cannot come to terms! . . . There is no better land anywhere."

"My land is good," retorted Violette.

"Wife, bring us some wine!" cried Michu.

"What, haven't you had enough to drink?" called Marthe's mother. "This is the fourteenth bottle since nine o'clock yesterday."

"Have you been here since nine o'clock this morning?" said Corentin, turning on Violette.

"No, asking your pardon. I haven't stirred from the place since nine o'clock yesterday night, and I am none the nearer the end. The more he makes me drink, the more he wants for his land."

"In making a bargain, you raise the price every time you raise your elbow," said Corentin.

A dozen empty bottles at the end of the table bore out the truth of the old grandmother's statement. Just at that moment the gendarme outside beckoned to Corentin.

"There is no horse in the stable," he said in a low voice, when they stood on the threshold. Corentin went in again.

"You have sent your boy to town on horseback, I expect," he remarked, "so he will be back again before long."

"No, sir," said Marthe; "he has gone on foot."

"Well, then, what have you done with your horse?"

"Lent him," Michu answered curtly.

"Come you here, my good apostle," said Corentin, beckoning to the bailiff. "I have a word or two to slip down your ear-tube."

Corentin and Michu went out together.

"That rifle that you were loading yesterday at four o'clock was meant to kill the State Councillor. Grévin saw you,

but you cannot be nabbed for that; there was plenty of malice aforethought, but witnesses are scarce. You put Violette to sleep, I do not know how, and you and your wife and boy spent the night out of doors: first, to warn Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne of our coming, and afterwards to rescue her cousins. You brought them back here, I do not know where as yet. Your boy and your wife brought down the corporal cleverly enough. In fact, you have beaten us. You are a famous, fine fellow. But the last word has not been said, and we shall not leave you to say it. Will you come to terms? Your masters will not be losers by it."

"Come this way; we can talk without being overheard," returned Michu; and he led the spy as far as the pond in the park. When Corentin saw the sheet of water, he looked Michu steadily in the eyes. Michu, no doubt, counted on his great physical strength to heave his companion into seven feet of mud below three feet of water. Michu looked back at him quite as steadily. Just so might some tawny-red Brazilian jaguar have gazed defiantly at a cold-blooded, flaccid boa-constrictor.

"I am not thirsty," remarked Corentin. He stood on the edge of the meadow, and his hand traveled down into a side pocket for the little dagger.

"We cannot come to an understanding," Michu remarked indifferently.

"Mind how you behave yourself, my dear fellow. Justice will keep an eye on you."

"If Justice sees no better than you do, nobody is safe."

"Do you refuse?" Corentin asked significantly.

"I would sooner have my throat cut a hundred times over, than have an understanding with such a rascal as you."

Corentin stepped briskly into the chaise after scanning Michu, the lodge, and Couraut, who barked after him. He left orders of some kind in Troyes and returned to Paris. Secret instructions and orders were issued to all the brigades of gendarmerie.

The search was kept up diligently and unremittingly in

every little hamlet through the months of December, January, and February. Ears were listening in every little public house. Three important things Corentin discovered. A horse answering to the description of Michu's nag was found dead near Lagny. The five horses buried in the Forest of Nodesme had been sold for five hundred francs apiece by various farmers and millers to a man who evidently must have been Michu. When the law was passed against Georges' accomplices and those who harbored them, Corentin narrowed the police supervision to the Forest of Nodesme, and later, after the arrest of Pichegru and Moreau, the strange faces disappeared from the countryside.

By that time Michu had lost his place. The Arcis notary brought instructions in writing from State Councillor Malin (now a senator) authorizing Grévin to receive the bailiff's accounts, and to give him notice to quit. In three days' time Michu obtained his discharge in due form, and became his own master. To the no small astonishment of the countryside, he took up his abode at Cinq-Cygne, and managed the farms on all the reserves of the château for Laurence. The day of his installation was the fatal day of the Duc d'Enghien's execution. Almost all over France men heard simultaneously of the Prince's capture, trial, sentence, and death; the dreadful reprisals which preceded the trials of Polignac, Rivière, and Moreau.

II.

CORENTIN'S REVENGE

A farm-house was to be built for Michu, but in the meantime the so-called Judas was lodged in the outbuilding above the stables, close to the famous breach in the fosse. Michu bought two horses, one for himself and one for little François, for they, as well as Gothard, now went everywhere with Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. People think nowadays that she used to take supplies to the four nobles, and to see that they wanted for nothing. François and Gothard, with Couraut and the Countess' hunting dogs, kept watch over the neighborhood of the hiding-place, to make sure that there was nobody within range, while Laurence and Michu carried provisions prepared by Marthe and her mother to Catherine without the knowledge of the servants. The secret was known to very few persons, for not a soul could doubt that there were spies in the village.

So, from motives of prudence, this expedition was never made oftener than twice in a week, and always at different hours, sometimes in the daytime, sometimes at night; nor did Laurence and Michu relax their vigilance during the trials of Polignac, Rivière, and Moreau. When a decree of the Senate called the Bonaparte family to the Imperial dignity, and Napoleon's nomination as Emperor was submitted to the French people, M. d'Hauteserre gave his signature to the memorial presented to him by Goulard. At length it was known that the Pope would anoint and crown Napoleon; and thenceforth when it was proposed that the Simeuses and the young d'Hauteserres should make petition to be struck off the List of *émigrés,* and to recover their citizens' rights, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne made no objection.

Old d'Hauteserre hurried off to Paris forthwith, and obtained an interview with the *ci-devant* Marquis de Chargebœuf, a personal acquaintance of M. de Talleyrand's. The Prince de Talleyrand was then in favor; he undertook that the petition should reach Joséphine, and Joséphine laid it before her husband. Bonaparte was already called Emperor, Sire, and Your Majesty, though the results of the ballot were not yet known. M. de Chargebœuf, M. d'Hauteserre, and the Abbé Goujet (who likewise had come to Paris) obtained audience of Talleyrand, and a promise of his support. Napoleon had already pardoned the principal actors in the great Royalist conspiracy against him, and the four gentlemen of the petition were merely suspected of complicity; yet when the Council of State rose, the Emperor summoned Malin, Fouché, Talleyrand, Cambacérès, Lebrun, and Dubois, the Prefect of Police, into his cabinet.

"Gentlemen," began the future Emperor, still in the dress of the First Consul, "gentlemen, we have received a memorial from the Sieurs de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre, officers in the Army of Condé, praying for an authorization to return to France."

"They are in France now," said Fouché.

"So are hundreds of others that I come across in Paris," remarked Talleyrand.

"You have never come across *these,* I think," returned Malin, "for they are in hiding in the Forest of Nodesme, and feel quite at home there."

Malin was very careful not to inform either the First Consul or Fouché of those few words that had saved his life; but relying entirely upon Corentin's reports, he convinced the Council that the four nobles were implicated in the Rivière and Polignac affair, and that Michu had been privy to it. His assertions were corroborated by the Prefect of Police.

"But how came this bailiff to know that the plot was discovered, when no one was in the secret save the Emperor, his councillors, and I myself?" asked Dubois, but nobody paid any attention to him.

"If they are in hiding in a forest and you have been looking for them for seven months," said Napoleon, addressing Fouché, "they have indeed expiated their sins!"

Malin was alarmed by Dubois' clear-sightedness. "They are my personal enemies," he said; "that is enough, I follow your Majesty's example; so I petition that their names may be struck off the list, and intercede with your Majesty for them."

"They will be less dangerous for you as citizens than as *émigrés*," observed Fouché, looking steadily at Malin; "for they will take the oath to uphold the Constitution under the Empire and to obey the laws."

"In what way are they dangerous to M. le Sénateur?" asked Napoleon.

The Prince de Talleyrand, on this, spoke for some time in a low voice with the future Emperor, and to all appearances the petition was granted; the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre were to be struck out from the List of *émigrés* and reinstated as citizens.

"Sire," said Fouché, "you may hear of them again."

At the instance of the Duc de Grandlieu, Talleyrand had promised on behalf of the four young men, that on the honor of a noble—a formula which exerted a great influence over Napoleon—they would attempt nothing against the Emperor, and make their submission without reservation.

"The MM. d'Hauteserre and de Simeuse have no wish to bear arms against France after the recent events. They have not much sympathy with the Imperial Government; they are people whom your Majesty must win over; but they will be content to live as law-abiding citizens on French soil," said the Minister. And he laid a letter expressing these views before Napoleon's eyes.

"Anything so outspoken must be sincere," said the Emperor, glancing at Cambacérès and Lebrun. "Have you any objections left?" he added, turning to Fouché.

"In your Majesty's interests, I ask permission to send these gentlemen the formal announcement of the erasure of their

names," replied the future Minister of Police, adding aloud, "*when it shall be definitely granted.*"

"So be it," said Napoleon. He thought that Fouché looked dissatisfied.

So the little council broke up, and the affair apparently was not at an end; one result of it was that a vague suspicion was associated with the names of the exiles in Napoleon's memory.

M. d'Hauteserre, sure of success, had written home to tell the good news, and the inmates of Cinq-Cygne consequently were not surprised when Goulard came a few days later to bid Madame d'Hauteserre and Laurence send the exiles to Troyes, where the Prefect would take their oath of allegiance to the Empire and the laws, and hand over the decree which reinstated them in their civic rights. Laurence told the mayor that she would send notice to her cousins and the two d'Hauteserres.

"Then they are not here?" remarked Goulard.

Madame d'Hauteserre looked up with an anxious face as Laurence left the mayor and went to take counsel with Michu. Michu saw no objection to the immediate enlargement of the exiles; so Laurence, with the Michus and Gothard, rode out into the forest, taking an extra horse with them, for the Countess meant to accompany her cousins to Troyes, and afterwards home to the château. All the servants heard the good news, and were out upon the lawn to watch the departure of the happy cavalcade.

The four young men left their hiding-place, mounted their horses without being seen, and took the road to Troyes, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne riding with them. Michu, meanwhile, with Gothard and François to help him, blocked up the mouth of the cave, and the three returned on foot; but on the way it occurred to Michu that the spoons and forks and a silver goblet which his masters had in use had been forgotten. He went back alone to look for them.

He had reached the margin of the pool, when he heard voices in the hole, and went straight to the opening among the bushes.

"You have come back to look for your plate, no doubt!"

It was Peyrade's voice; it was Peyrade's big red face grinning at him through the leaves.

A sudden pang seemed to shoot through every joint in Michu's body, so intense was the vague, indefinite foreboding, the premonition of coming trouble; he could not account for it; the young Simeuses were in safety at last. He came forward, however, and met Corentin on the steps with a tallow dip in his hand.

"We are not spiteful," said this person; "we might have nabbed your *ci-devants* a week ago, but we knew their names were taken off the List. . . . You are an uncommonly knowing dog! And you gave us so much trouble that at least we must satisfy our curiosity."

"I would give something to know for how much we were sold and who sold us," cried Michu.

"If that tickles your curiosity so much, my boy," said Peyrade, with a smile, "look at your horses' shoes, and you will see that you have betrayed yourselves."

"No malice," added Corentin, beckoning the captain of gendarmes to come up with the horses.

"That miserable smith from Paris who shod horses so well in the English fashion, and has left Cinq-Cygne since, was in their pay," exclaimed Michu. "They had only to send one of their people, disguised as a faggot-cutter or a poacher, to follow up the tracks of our horses when it was damp, after the man had put those nails in the shoes. We are quits."

Michu pretty soon took comfort; he bethought himself that now, when the gentlemen were Frenchmen again and at liberty, the discovery of the hiding-place could do them no harm. And yet his forebodings were well founded. The police and the Jesuits have this virtue—they never forget their friends nor their enemies.

Old d'Hauteserre came back from Paris, and not a little surpised was he to find the good news arrived before him. Durieu made ready the most succulent of dinners. The servants wore their best clothes; the whole household waited

impatiently for the exiles, and towards four o'clock they came home, joyful yet humiliated, for they were to be under the supervision of the police authorities for two years. The whole of that time they must be resident in the commune of Cinq-Cygne, while they were bound to report themselves every month at the prefecture.

"I will send you the register to sign," the Prefect had said. "Then in a few months' time you can make application for a remission of the conditions, which were imposed at the same time on all Pichegru's accomplices. I will support your demand."

These restrictions, though well enough merited, had a little damped the young people's spirits. But Laurence burst out laughing.

"The Emperor of the French," she said, "was not very well brought up; he is not accustomed yet to pardon."

When the party reached the iron gate, they found every one from the château there to meet them, as well as a goodly proportion of the folk from the village waiting upon the road to see the young nobles; for the fame of their adventures filled the department. Madame d'Hauteserre held her sons for a long time in her arms; it was a tearful face that she turned upon them all; she could say nothing, and sat, overcome but happy, for a good while that evening.

As soon as the twin brothers appeared and dismounted, there was a general cry of surprise, so astonishingly alike were they,—the same expression, the same voice, the same tricks of manner. They rose in the saddle, flung a leg over the crupper, and threw back the bridle, to dismount as if by one accord; and seemed the more like a genuine pair of Ménechmes because they were dressed exactly alike. They wore boots *à la* Suwaroff, fitting closely over the instep; tight, white doeskin breeches, green shooting jackets with metal buttons, black cravats, and doeskin gloves. They were "charming cavaliers," as the saying went in those days, were these two young men of thirty-one. Of average height, but well set-up, they had shapely foreheads, dark hair, swarthy pale faces,

and bright eyes, liquid as the eyes of children, beneath the fringe of long lashes. Their speech, gentle as a woman's, fell graciously from their shapely red lips. Their manners, finer and more polished than the manners of the country noblesse, showed that a knowledge of men and the world had been for them a second education, more important even than the first in the making of an accomplished gentleman.

Thanks to Michu they had never wanted money; they had been able to travel, they had been well received at foreign courts. Old M. d'Hauteserre and the abbé thought their manner somewhat lofty, but in their position this was perhaps the result of a lofty nature. And while in many little ways it was evident that they had received a careful education, they excelled also in all physical exercises.

The only difference that could be seen in them was a difference of temperament. The gayety of the younger was as charming as the tinge of melancholy in the older brother; but even this contrast was one simply of mental attitude and only perceptible after a long intimacy.

"Ah! my girl," Michu said in Marthe's ear, "how could one help being devoted to those two lads?"

And Marthe, looking with eyes of feminine and motherly admiration, gave her husband a charming little nod and squeezed his hand. The servants were permitted to embrace their new masters.

Many times during the seven months of hiding, the four gentlemen had walked abroad; it was a piece of necessary imprudence; and Michu, his son, and Gothard were always on the watch. During those walks, by the light of starlit nights, Laurence had connected the present with the past of their common life, and felt the impossibility of choosing between the brothers. An unselfish love for them both was equally strong in her. It seemed to her that she had two hearts. And Marie Paul and Paul Marie had not dared to speak of the now imminent rivalry. Perhaps, as yet, all three of them had left chance to decide; but Laurence evidently felt the position of their minds, for after an instant of visible

hesitation she gave an arm to both brothers and went towards the salon, followed by Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, who clung about their sons, plying them with questions. The servants sent up a shout of "Long live the Cinq-Cygnes and the Simeuses!"

And Laurence, standing between the brothers, turned to thank them with a charming gesture.

When these nine people began to observe one another—for after every meeting even of members of the same family, the time comes when they all begin to notice the changes made by long absence—Adrien's first glance at Laurence made it clear to his mother and the abbé, who happened to see it, that the young man was in love with Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. Adrien was the younger d'Hauteserre. His nature was gentle and kindly, and in spite of the catastrophes that had tried the man, he had still a boy's heart. In this respect he was like a great many military men; a life of continual peril leaves no space for love; and the bashfulness that becomes youth so well, weighed upon the man of thirty. Adrien was a complete contrast to his brother, a rough-looking man, a mighty hunter and valorous soldier, resolute but heavy and matter-of-fact, lacking in mental quickness as in refinement of feeling. The life of the one was contemplative, that of the other active; yet both were men of honor according to their rank in life.

Yet Adrien d'Hauteserre, dark-haired, short, slight, and spare, gave the impression of great strength, while his tall, big, fair-haired brother looked like a weakling. Adrien was of nervous temperament; he possessed strength of soul, while his lymphatic brother Robert delighted in trials of muscular force. Interesting though it might be to inquire into the causes of a freak of nature not unfrequently seen in family histories, the fact can merely be touched upon here by way of explanation of the fact that Adrien had no rival to fear in his brother.

Robert's feeling toward Laurence was made up of a cousin's

affection and a noble's respect for a young woman belonging to his own order. As for his manner of regarding women, Robert d'Hauteserre belonged to that section of mankind who hold that woman is a kind of appendage to man, and that the function of maternity is purely physical. They look for physical perfections in full measure, and count a woman as naught. To consider a woman as anything but a cipher socially, politically, and in the family, according to these authorities, would turn society upside down. In these days we have traveled so far from the views held by society in its primitive state, that even though a woman may not wish for the insidious liberty offered her by divers new sects, she may well be scandalized by such opinions; but Robert d'Hauteserre had the misfortune to hold them. Robert belonged to the Dark Ages; Adrien to the Nineteenth Century. These differences, so far from estranging the brothers, drew them more closely together. The curé, Mademoiselle Goujet, and Madame d'Hauteserre discerned and grasped the significance of the shades of character in the course of the evening over their game at boston. Even now they saw difficulties ahead.

At twenty-three years of age, after a life of solitary thought, after the anguish of the failure of a vast political project, Laurence became a woman again. She felt a great craving for affection; she brought all the charm of her mind into play; she was enchanting with the unconsciousness of a girl of fifteen; she showed how fascinating she could be in her tenderness. For the last thirteen years she had been a woman only through a woman's suffering. Now the lost years should be made good for her. She would show herself loving and coquettish, as hitherto she had been strong and great.

The four old people stayed on in the salon till every one else had gone, and shook their heads over this new phase in a charming maiden. What possibilities of passion might there not be in a girl of her temper and nobility? Both brothers loved the same woman equally well and equally blindly. Which of the two would Laurence choose? Would the other die of a broken heart?

Laurence was a countess in her own right. She would bring her husband a title, great privileges, an old illustrious name. Perhaps the Marquis de Simeuse, remembering this, would sacrifice himself for the sake of his brother, a poor and untitled younger son by the old law. But would the younger consent to accept the sacrifice of so great a happiness as the right of calling Laurence his wife? While they were at a distance, there were few drawbacks to the rivalry, and, moreover the brothers' lives were so often in danger, that the hazards of war might cut the knot at any time. But what might be looked for now that the three were together? Marie Paul and Paul Marie had reached an age when passion grows in strength by all the forces of a man's nature. Could they share their fair cousin's looks, glances, words, and attentions, and not break out into jealousy that might bring fearful results to pass? What would be the end of the pleasant life that they led together?

To these suggestions, brought up one by one over the last game of boston, Madame d'Hauteserre had her answer: she did not believe that Laurence would marry either of her cousins. In the course of the evening the old gentlewoman felt one of the inexplicable presentiments which remain a secret between mothers and God. And Laurence's conscience felt no less dismay over this *tête-à-tête* with her cousins. To the exciting drama of the plot, to the days when their lives were in danger, to the years of adversity and emigration, another drama had succeeded, a drama of which she had never thought. Her noble nature shrank from the abrupt measure of refusing both the twins; she was too honest a woman to marry another and to bear an irresistible passion in the depths of her heart. To remain unmarried, to weary out her cousins with delay, and then to take as her husband the one that loved her faithfully in spite of her caprices—this was a conclusion not so much deliberately chosen as dimly foreseen. As Laurence fell asleep she told herself that the wisest way was to leave fate to settle her affairs. In love, chance is a woman's providence.

Next morning Michu started for Paris, and a few days later returned with four fine horses for his new masters. The shooting would begin in six weeks' time; and the young Countess thought, not without reason, that sport with its absorbing interests would provide relief from the difficulties of the *tête-à-tête* at the château. The first result was quite unexpected; it surprised the onlookers at this strange love-affair while it roused their admiration. Without any deliberate agreement, the two brothers vied with each other in affectionate attentions; they seemed to find satisfaction in these pleasures of the soul. They were as fraternal with Laurence as with each other. Nothing more natural. After so long an absence they both felt that they must learn to know their cousin, and give her time to know them both, while they left her free to make her choice. The affection that made but one life of two lives sustained them through this ordeal. Love even as motherhood seemed as if it could know no distinction between the brothers. Laurence was obliged to give them different cravats to know them, a white one for the elder and black for the younger. But for this complete resemblance, this identity of life which deceived all beholders, such a situation would seem, and rightly seem, impossible. It is, in fact, inexplicable until it happens; it is one of those things that nobody can believe until they see it, and once seen, it requires even more mental effort to explain it than to believe it.

If Laurence spoke, her voice vibrated in the same fashion through two hearts, both alike loving and true. If she said anything ingenious or amusing her eyes met a glad response in other eyes that followed her every movement and interpreted her lightest wish; eyes that always smiled on her with a new expression of gayety or of tender melancholy.

Where the woman they loved was concerned, both the brothers showed that wonderful spontaneous impulse of heart and action in harmony with the impulse, which, according to the Abbé Goujet, reached the sublime. Often, for instance, if something was sought for, or if there was a question of one

of the little services that a man is eager to perform for the woman he loves, the elder brother would yield to the younger with a half-proud, half-pathetic glance at his cousin; and the younger made it a point of honor to repay debts of this kind.

This generous rivalry in a sentiment which sometimes reduces a man to the jealous ferocity of the brute, completely confused the ideas of the old people who were watching them.

Little things like these often brought the tears into Laurence's eyes. Perhaps it is possible to give an idea of her feelings, by recalling an experience that makes an immense impression upon more highly endowed organizations,—the memory of two beautiful voices singing together in perfect harmony. When Sontag and Malibran, for instance, sing in a duet, and that instrument, the human voice, is controlled by the genius of a great executant, then the two parts are blended in a single melody, and it is as if the sighs of one impassioned being were borne in upon the soul. Sometimes the Marquis de Simeuse, from the depths of a great armchair, would turn his intent melancholy gaze upon the younger brother, who was laughing and talking with Laurence; and to the curé, watching him, it seemed, at such times, that this was a man capable of some great act of self-sacrifice. And then again, before long, he caught the gleam of unconquerable passion in the Marquis' eyes. If either of the brothers chanced to be with Laurence, he might easily believe that he alone was loved.

"It seems to me when one is away, that they are but one," said the Countess, when the abbé questioned her as to her feelings. And then the abbé knew that coquetry was utterly lacking in Laurence. She could not realize that two men loved her.

"But, my dear little girl, you really must make up your mind sometime," Madame d'Hauteserre remonstrated one evening,—Madame d'Hauteserre, whose son was silently dying of love for Laurence.

"Let us be happy!" the girl answered. "God will save us from ourselves."

Adrien d'Hauteserre locked his gnawing jealousy into the depths of his heart, and kept his pain to himself. He knew how little hope there was for him. He was content to watch this charming girl, and indeed, during those months of suspense, Laurence shone radiantly. She had grown bewitching, she took all the pains to please that a woman takes when she is loved. She followed the fashions. More than once she made a hasty journey to Paris to appear lovelier than before in new clothes or finery. And, finally, she would give her cousins even the least pleasures of that sense of being at home to which they had so long been strangers, and, in spite of loud outcries from her guardian, she turned the château into the most comfortable place of residence in Champagne at that time.

Robert d'Hauteserre understood nothing of all this drama beneath the surface. He did not see that his brother loved Laurence. He liked to rally his cousin on her coquetry, for he confused that detestable defect with a desire to please; but Robert was equally obtuse in all matters of taste and feeling and culture. So when the representative of the Dark Ages appeared upon the scene, Laurence at once made him take the part of clown in the play. Nor did he suspect this. She amused her cousins by drawing Robert into a discussion, and leading him on insidiously till he floundered into the marsh where dulness and ignorance sink deeper at every step. She excelled in the ingenious mystifications which, to be perfect, must leave the victim quite satisfied with himself. And yet, during those pleasant days, the one really happy period in the lives of the three charming young people, Robert, coarse though his nature was, never interfered between the Simeuses and Laurence, with some virile, trenchant word which might have decided the question. The sincerity of the brothers impressed him. And he guessed, no doubt, that a woman might hesitate before showing a sign of preference for the one, when the other must be pained by it; when one brother was made happy at the expense of the other. This forbearance on Robert's part is an admirable comment upon a situation, which

would certainly have been a case referred to the higher powers, in the ages of faith when the sovereign pontiff had power to intervene to cut the Gordian knot in so phenomenal a conjuncture, so well-nigh inscrutable a mystery. The Revolution had disciplined the three in the Catholic faith, and religion increased the gravity of the crisis; for it is greatness of character that makes a great situation, and neither Monsieur nor Madame d'Hauteserre nor the Goujets looked for anything common or mean from Laurence or the Simeuses.

The drama was a secret kept within the family circle. So absorbed were they all in watching its slow yet swift progress, the succession of unlooked-for joys, little contests, fallacious preferences, disappointments, cruel suspense, explanations delayed till the morrow, and mute declarations of love, that the coronation of Napoleon passed quite unheeded by the inmates of Cinq-Cygne. And besides, they had found a truce from passion in the strenuous pleasures of the chase. Excessive physical fatigue prevented perilous excursions into the wide fields of dreamland. Neither Laurence nor her cousins gave a thought to politics; every day had palpitating interests of its own.

"Really," Mademoiselle Goujet remarked one evening, "of all these lovers I cannot tell which loves the best!"

Adrien happened to be in the room with the boston players; he looked up at the words and the color died out of his face. Lately it had only been the joy of seeing Laurence and of hearing her voice that bound him to life.

"In my opinion," said the curé, "the Countess, as a woman, loves with much less reserve."

A few minutes later Laurence came in with the two Simeuses and Robert d'Hauteserre. The newspapers had just arrived. Now that conspiracies had failed at home, England, plotting abroad, was bringing Europe into a league against France. The Emperor had meant to repay France for his election by the ruin of the English power, but the disastrous battle of Trafalgar overturned the most tremendous schemes ever planned by human genius. The camp at Boulogne was

broken up. Napoleon's armies, inferior as always in point of numbers, were about to give battle to Europe on new ground. The whole world was wondering what the result of the campaign would be.

"Oh! this time he will be beaten," said Robert, when he had read the newspaper through.

"He has all Russia and Austria on his hands," remarked Marie Paul.

"He has never manœuvered troops in Germany," added Paul Marie.

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Laurence.

"Of the Emperor," replied all three.

Laurence gave her lovers a disdainful glance that left them crestfallen, while it sent Adrien into a rapture of joy. The slighted suitor made a gesture of admiration; the proud look on his face said plainly enough that he had no thoughts now save for Laurence.

"So, you see, love has made him forget his hate," the Abbé Goujet said, in a low voice.

This was the first, the last, and only reproach that the brothers incurred, but at that moment they were convicted of an inferiority in love compared with their cousin Laurence, who only heard the wonderful tidings of Austerlitz two months afterwards, through an argument between old d'Hauteserre and his sons. For old M. d'Hauteserre, consistent in his schemes, wished his boys to ask to serve under the Emperor; they would, no doubt, take their rank on entering the service, and a chance of a splendid career was still open to them. But the pure Royalist party was the stronger at Cinq-Cygne. Laurence and the four younger men laughed at the prudent old man, who seemed to scent coming misfortune. Possibly prudence is not so much a virtue as a kind of intellectual *sense,* if it be possible to put those words together; but the day will surely come when physiologists and philosophers will admit that the senses are, in a manner, the sheath of a vivid and penetrating projection of the intelligence.

After the conclusion of peace between France and Austria

toward the end of February, 1806, a relative of the families came over to Cinq-Cygne. This was the *ci-devant* Marquis de Chargebœuf, owner of an estate in the Seine-et-Marne with outlying lands in the Aube. The Marquis had exerted himself on behalf of his relatives at the time of the application to be taken off the List of *émigrés;* at a later time he was to give them further proof of his attachment. The family at the château were breakfasting when the Marquis arrived in a kind of calèche derisively called a *berlingot* in those days. They burst into a fit of laughter as the shabby carriage came along the narrow, paved road; but when the old man's bald head was thrust out from between the leather curtains, M. d'Hauteserre exclaimed that it was the Marquis de Chargebœuf; and they all rose from the table to pay their respects to the head of the house.

"We are to blame for allowing our relative to be beforehand with us," said the Marquis de Simeuse, addressing his brother and the d'Hauteserres. "We ought to go out to thank him."

The servant on the box-seat, a man in ordinary peasant's dress, stuck a wagoner's whip into a cumbrous leather tube, and went round to assist the Marquis to alight; but Adrien and the younger Simeuse were there before him. They undid the brass handles of the door, and helped him to descend, in spite of protests. The Marquis was wont to maintain that his yellow *berlingot* with its leather door was an excellent and commodious vehicle. Meanwhile the servant with Gothard's help had unharnessed the horses,—a pair of heavy, sturdy beasts with sleek hind quarters, equally accustomed, no doubt, to work on the land or on the road.

"In spite of the cold? Why, you show the prowess of a knight of ancient days," said Laurence, leading her aged relative into the salon.

"It is not your place to come to see an old fogy like me," he said,—a delicate way of insinuating a reproach.

"What brings him here?" old d'Hauteserre privately wondered.

M. de Chargebœuf, a neat, little, elderly gentleman of

sixty-seven, wore powder, pigeon's wings, and a bag-wig. His thin legs were encased in ribbed stockings and light-colored small-clothes; his green cloth shooting-coat was adorned with gold buttons and frogs, and his white waistcoat was dazzling with its portentous quantity of gold embroidery. A costume still worn in 1805 by elderly people harmonized well with a countenance not unlike that of the great Frederick. The Marquis never wore his cocked hat for fear of disturbing the *demi-lune* of powder on his head. He leaned his right hand on a hooked walking-cane, holding both hat and cane in a manner worthy of *le Grand Monarque.*

This worthy gentleman divested himself of a wadded silk gown, and sank into the depths of an easy-chair. His cane and cocked hat he held between his knees. None but the *roués* of the court of Louis Quinze ever possessed the secret of the attitude which left the hands free to toy with the snuff-box, always a valuable trinket. And, in fact, the Marquis now produced a very handsome snuff-box from a waistcoat pocket closed by a flap covered with gold scroll-work; and while he offered snuff with a gracious gesture and benign expression, and prepared a pinch, he had time to see, in the first place, that his visit gave his relatives genuine pleasure, and in the second, to understand why the *émigrés* had been remiss. "When people make love, they forget to pay visits," his face seemed to say.

"We are going to keep you for a few days, are we not?" said Laurence.

"That is quite out of the question," returned he. "If we were not so kept apart by events—for you have made longer journeys than the distance between our houses, dear child—you would know that I have daughters and daughters-in-law and granddaughters and grandchildren; and they would all be anxious if they did not see me to-night. I have more than forty miles to drive."

"You have very good horses," said the Marquis de Simeuse.

"Oh! I have only come from Troyes; I was there yesterday on business."

Then followed inquiries after the family, the Marquise de Chargebœuf, and matters really indifferent, in which courtesy requires us to take a lively interest. It seemed to M. d'Hauteserre that M. de Chargebœuf's object in coming had been to recommend his relatives to commit no imprudences. The times were very much changed, so the Marquis took occasion to say, and nobody could tell now what the Emperor might become.

"Oh! he will be a god," said Laurence.

Then the good Marquis talked of making concessions. And M. d'Hauteserre, hearing him discourse on the necessity of submission, with far more authority and conviction than he himself ever put into his doctrine, looked almost imploringly at his offspring.

"Would you serve that man?" asked the Marquis de Simeuse.

"Why, yes, if the interests of my family required it."

At last the Marquis began to hint vaguely at distant dangers; and, when Laurence asked him to explain himself, strongly recommended the young men to give up hunting and to keep quietly at home.

"You always think of the lands of Gondreville as your own," he said, turning to the Simeuses; "that is the way to stir up danger. I can see by your astonishment that you have no idea that there are those in Troyes who bear you ill-will; your courage has not been forgotten there. Nobody scruples to tell how you baffled the police; some praise you, some say you are the Emperor's enemies, and a few fanatics here and there are amazed at the Emperor's clemency in your case. But this is nothing. You have outwitted persons that thought themselves more than a match for you, and low people never forgive. Now all the judicial appointments in the department are, more or less, made by our enemy Malin; he has put his creatures in every post, even on the staff of prosecuting counsel; and, sooner or later, his judicial functionaries will be uncommonly well pleased to find you implicated in some delicate business. Some peasant of other will pick a quarrel with

you for trespassing over his field, you will be out with loaded guns, you have quick tempers, misfortunes may easily happen. People in your position must be in the right a hundred times over if they are not to be in the wrong. I do not say this unadvisedly. Your arrondissement is still under police supervision; a commissary is maintained in that little hole of a place, Arcis, on purpose to protect a member of the Imperial Senate from your designs on his life. He is afraid of you. And he says so."

"But it is a slander!" cried the younger brother.

"A slander! I myself think so. . . . But what does the public think? That is the important point. Michu once lay in wait for Malin. Malin has not forgotten it. Since your return, the Countess has taken Michu into her service. And so a good many people, most people in fact, think that Malin is right. You do not realize how very delicate the position is, when an *émigré* is brought in contact with the new owner of his estates. The Prefect, an intelligent man, just let fall a word or two about you yesterday, and I felt uneasy. In short I would rather not see you here——"

The Marquis' reply was received with the utmost amazement. Marie Paul rang energetically.

"Gothard," he said, when the little fellow came, "go and fetch Michu."

It was not long before the ex-bailiff of Gondreville appeared.

"Michu, my friend," began the Marquis de Simeuse, "is it true that you tried to kill Malin?"

"Yes, my lord Marquis. And when he comes back I will lie in wait for him again——"

"Do you know that we are suspected of setting you to watch for him? That our cousin, as she took you for her tenant, is accused of complicity in a plot against his life?"

"Good gracious!" cried Michu. "There must be a curse hanging over me. Am I never to rid you quietly of Malin?"

"No, no, my boy," said Paul Marie. "You must leave our service and the neighborhood. We will watch over your in-

terests and put you in the way of prospering. Sell all that you have here, realize everything, and we will send you to Trieste. We have a friend there who has very large business connections; you will be very useful to him, until things improve here for us all."

The tears came into Michu's eyes; he stood glued to the spot on the polished floor.

"Did any one see you when you lay in wait for Malin?" asked the Marquis de Chargebœuf.

"Grévin, the notary, was talking with him, or I should have shot him, and very lucky it was that I did not, as Madame la Comtesse knows," he added, looking at his mistress.

The Marquis de Chargebœuf seemed to be put out by all this questioning, although it was conducted by the family among themselves. "Is this Grévin the only person who knows of it?" he asked.

"That spy who came down at the time to trap the masters knew about it too."

M. Chargebœuf got up and went to the window, as if he were interested in the gardens.

"You have made great improvements here at Cinq-Cygne, have you not?" he said; and he went out, followed by Laurence and the Simeuses, who understood the meaning of the inquiry.

Outside, the old noble turned to them.

"You are open-natured and generous," he said, "but rash as ever. I give you warning of a rumor, *which must be a slander,* nothing more natural; and you proceed to prove that it is well founded before weak-minded folk like Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre and their sons.—Oh! you young people! you young people!—You should leave Michu here," he continued; "it is you, *you* who ought to go! But at any rate, if you stop in the neighborhood, write a few lines to the Senator, tell him that you have just heard through me of the rumors current about your servant, and that he has had notice given him."

"*We!*" cried the brothers. "Are we to write to Malin who

murdered our father and mother, and impudently robbed us of our estates?"

"That is all true; but he is one of the greatest personages at the Imperial court, and a king in the Aube."

"Malin that voted for the King's death if the Army of Condé should enter France, and otherwise for perpetual imprisonment!" exclaimed Laurence.

"And probably advised the death of the Duc d'Enghien," exclaimed Paul Marie.

"Oh! well, if you have a mind to recapitulate all his titles to nobility," exclaimed the Marquis, "say that he pulled down Robespierre by the skirts of his coat as soon as he saw that the majority were for getting rid of Robespierre; he would have had Bonaparte taken out and shot if the 18th Brumaire had failed; he would bring back the Bourbons if Napoleon should totter. The strongest will always find Malin at his side, with a sword or a pistol ready so that he can rid himself at once of any formidable antagonist!—But so much the more reason."

"We are sinking very low," said Laurence.

The old Marquis led them further away to a strip of grass-plot covered with a light sprinkling of snow.

"Ah! you children, you will fly into indignation when you hear a wise man's advice; but it is my duty to give it. This is what I should do. I would take some old gentleman (like myself, for instance) as mediator. I would authorize him to make Malin an offer—a million of francs for a ratification of the sale of Gondreville. . . . Oh! keep the thing quiet, he would agree to it. Then as the funds stand now you would have a hundred thousand francs per annum, you could buy a fine estate somewhere else in France, leave M. d'Hauteserre as steward of Cinq-Cygne, and pull straws to decide which of you shall marry our fair heiress here. But an old man's talk in young ears is like young people's talk for old folk—sound with no meaning in it."

He signified that he wished to hear no reply and returned to the salon, the Abbé Goujet and his sister having meantime

arrived. The Simeuses were indignant at the proposal that they should pull straws for their cousin, and Laurence was, so to speak, disgusted by the unpalatable remedy pointed out by their relative. The three were courteous, but less gracious than before. Affection had received a shock. M. de Chargebœuf felt the coolness, he looked again and again at the three charming faces, and his eyes were full of compassion. The conversation became general, but he still talked of the necessity of accepting the situation, and vaunted M. d'Hauteserre's persistent wish, to see his sons in the Emperor's army.

"Bonaparte creates dukes," he said, "and fiefs of the Empire; some day he will create counts. Malin would like to be Comte de Gondreville.—There is an idea which you may find useful," he added, looking as he spoke at the Simeuses.

"Or disastrous," said Laurence.

The horses were put in, the Marquis rose at once to go, followed by the whole family. He beckoned to Laurence when he was seated; she sprang, light as a bird, to the carriage step.

"You are not an ordinary woman," he said, lowering his voice for her ear; "you should understand me. Malin cannot let you alone; his conscience is uneasy; he will lay some sort of trap for you. Whatever you do, be very careful even of your slightest actions. Compound the matter, in short, that is my last word to you."

The brothers stood passive and motionless beside Laurence on the lawn, watching the *berlingot* as it turned through the gate and rolled away on the road to Troyes; Laurence had repeated the old gentleman's last words to them. It is always a mistake on the part of age and experience to come upon the scene in a *berlingot,* with a pair of striped stockings and a bag-wig. Not one of the three young creatures could conceive the changes that were taking place in France. Every nerve in them was quivering with indignation; honor like their noble blood was boiling in their veins.

"And he is the head of the Chargebœufs!" said the Marquis de Simeuse, "a man with the words *Adsit fortior* for his motto, one of the grandest of all war-cries!"

"There is only the *bœuf* left; it is a bovine metamorphosis," said Laurence, with a bitter smile.

"The age of St. Louis is past!" cried the younger of the Simeuses.

"'To DIE SINGING!'" Laurence exclaimed. "The cry of the five maids who founded our house shall be mine!"

"And our motto is CY MEURS. So no surrender," added the elder brother, "for when you come to think over it our relative the Ox ruminated very sagaciously over what he came to say to us. Gondreville will sooner or later be Malin's name."

"And residence!" exclaimed Marie Paul.

"Mansard designed it for nobles, and the people would bring up their broods in it," said his brother.

"If it is to be so, I would rather see Gondreville burnt," Laurence burst out.

A man from the village had come to take a look at a calf that old d'Hauteserre was selling him; he came out of the cow-shed at that moment and heard the words.

"Let us go back to the house," said Laurence, with a smile; "a little more and we should have done something imprudent, and made good the prophecy of the Ox, over a bargain for a calf."

"Michu, my poor fellow, I had forgotten about your prank," she said, as she returned to the salon; "but we are not in the odor of sanctity hereabouts, so do not get us into trouble. Have you any other peccadillo on your conscience?"

"I am sorry that I did not kill my old master's murderer before I hurried to the rescue of my present masters."

"Michu!" cried the curé.

"But I am not going to leave the neighborhood until I know that you are safe," he continued, taking no notice of the exclamation. "I see fellows prowling about and I don't altogether like the looks of them. The last time that we were out shooting in the forest, that gamekeeper kind of fellow that they have taken on in my place in Gondreville came up to me and asked me if we thought we were at home there.

'Ah! my boy,' I told him, 'it is not easy to break yourself of a habit in two months when it is a thing that has been done for two hundred years.'"

"You are in the wrong, Michu," said the Marquis de Simeuse, with a pleased smile.

"What did he say?" asked M. d'Hauteserre.

"He said that he should let the Senator know of our pretensions."

"The Comte de Gondreville!" cried the elder Simeuse. "Ah! a fine farce! By the by, they say 'your Majesty' to Bonaparte."

"And 'your Highness' to my lord the Grand Duke of Berg," added the curé.

"Who may he be?" asked M. de Simeuse.

"Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law," said old d'Hauteserre.

"Good!" was Laurence's comment. "And do they say 'your Majesty' to the Marquis de Beauharnais' widow?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"We ought to go to Paris to see all this!" cried Laurence.

"Alas, mademoiselle," said Michu, "I went to Paris to take François to school, and upon my word there is no trying on any nonsense with the Imperial Guard, as they call them. If the whole army is cut out on that pattern, it may last our time and longer."

"They talk of noble families that are entering the service," said M. d'Hauteserre.

"And as the law stands at present, your children will be bound to serve," rejoined the curé.

"The law recognizes no distinctions of rank or name, now."

"That man is doing us more damage with his court, than the Revolution did with the axe!" exclaimed Laurence.

"The Church prays for him," put in the curé.

All these things that were said, one after another, were like so many commentaries on the old Marquis de Chargebœuf's wise words; but the young people had too much confidence, too strong a sense of honor to accept a compromise They said among themselves what every defeated party has

said since the world began, to wit, that there would be an end of the prosperity of the victorious side. The Emperor was kept in his place entirely by the army; sooner or later the right would triumph, and so forth, and so forth; and thus, in spite of warnings, they fell into the pit that was digged before them, while prudent and docile folk, like old d'Hauteserre, would have avoided it. If people would be honest, they would perhaps admit that misfortunes never burst upon them without some warning beforehand, either from without or within; but there are many who only recognize the profound significance of the portent, mysterious or otherwise, after the calamity has befallen them.

"In any case, Madame la Comtesse knows that I cannot leave the place until I have sent in my accounts," Michu whispered to Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne.

For all answer she gave him a look, and he went. Michu sold his land at once to Beauvisage, the tenant of Bellache, but he could not receive payment for nearly three weeks. Laurence, meanwhile, had told her cousins of their fortune hidden in the forest; and so, just a month after the Marquis' visit, she suggested that they should unearth the hoard on the mid-Lent holiday. But for heavy falls of snow, it would have been dug up before; but Michu was better pleased that his masters should be present on the occasion. He had quite made up his mind to leave the place; he could not trust himself.

"Malin has come down to Gondreville quite suddenly, no one knows why," he told his mistress; "and the thought of having Gondreville put up for sale in consequence of the owner's decease, would be too much for me. I feel like a guilty man, when I do not act on the inspiration."

"What can have induced him to leave Paris in the depth of winter?"

"All Arcis is talking about it," said Michu; "he left his family in Paris and brought down no one but his own man. M. Grévin, the Arcis notary, and Madame Marion, the receiver-general's wife (sister-in-law of the other Marion, Malin's stalking-horse), are keeping him company."

Laurence thought the mid-Lent holiday a capital day for their purpose, for it gave her an excuse for ridding herself of the servants. The masqueraders in the town attracted the peasants; and no one would be working in the fields. But as so often happens in criminal affairs, it was precisely the choice of the day that helped to bring about the disaster. Fate was as ingenious in her calculations as Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. The young people held a council, decided that Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre would be so anxious if they knew that a hoard of eleven hundred thousand francs in gold was buried on the outskirts of a forest, that they concluded to spare them the knowledge. The young d'Hauteserres, consulted on the point, were of the same opinion. The secret of the expedition was confined to the four nobles, Gothard, Michu, and Laurence herself.

After much calculation it seemed possible that each horse could carry a load of forty-eight thousand francs in a long bag over the crupper. Three journeys would be enough. It was agreed that the servants' curiosity might prove dangerous, so they were all sent off to Troyes to see the mid-Lent rejoicings. Catherine, Marthe, and Durieu, who might be trusted, stayed at the château. The servants very willingly accepted their holiday and went before daybreak. Gothard, with Michu's help, rubbed down the horses and saddled them early in the morning; the cavalcade went round by way of the gardens, and there they started for the forest. They were just mounting (for the park gate was so low that every had gone in on foot, each leading his horse) when old Beauvisage, the tenant of Bellache, came by.

"Hullo!" cried Gothard, "here comes somebody——"

"Oh, it is I!" said the honest farmer, coming out upon them. "Good-day, gentlemen. So you are going a-hunting in spite of the Perfect's orders. I am not one to complain, but take care! If you have friends, you have plenty of enemies."

"Aha!" returned the burly d'Hauteserre, with a smile. "God send success to our hunting, and you shall have your masters back again."

At these words, on which events were to put a very different construction, Laurence looked sternly at Robert. The Marquis de Simeuse imagined that Malin would give up Gondreville if the purchase-money was returned to him. The Marquis de Chargebœuf had advised the exactly opposite course. Robert, sharing the young people's hopes, had them in his mind when he uttered these fatal words.

"In any case, mum's the word, old boy," Michu said to Beauvisage, as he took the key and followed the others.

It was one of those bright days toward the end of March, when there is no dampness in the air; when the ground is dry, the weather cloudless, and the warmth seems curiously at variance with the leafless trees. So mild was the weather that there were patches of green here and there in the country as they went.

"We are setting out to look for treasure, and all the while you are the real prize of our house, cousin," laughed the elder of the Simeuses. Laurence went at a footpace ahead of the others, with a cousin on either side. The two d'Hauteserres came next, and Michu brought up the rear. Gothard had been sent on in front to look out along the way.

"If our fortune, a part of it at least, is to be found again, marry my brother," said the younger of the twins in a low voice. "He idolizes you; you would be as rich as the nobles of these days are obliged to be."

"No. Leave the money to him, and I will marry you, since I am rich enough for two," returned she.

"So let it be!" cried the Marquis de Simeuse. "And I will go to find a wife worthy to be your sister."

"Then you love me less than I thought," said Laurence, looking at him jealously.

"No; I love you both more than you love me," retorted the Marquis.

"And for that reason you would sacrifice yourself?" asked Laurence, with eyes full of the momentary preference. The Marquis made no reply. His silence drew an impatient gesture from her.

"Very well," she said; "in that case I should think of you always, and my husband would find that intolerable."

"How could I live without you?" exclaimed the younger brother, looking at the older.

"Still, you cannot take us both," said the Marquis. "And it is time to make a decision," he added, his tone abrupt with deep feeling. And he pushed on ahead lest the d'Hauteserres should hear. His companions' horses followed. When they had put a reasonable interval between themselves and the rest of the party, Laurence tried to speak, but at first tears came and no words.

"I will go into a convent," she said at last.

"And be the last of the Cinq-Cygnes?" asked the younger Simeuse. "Then instead of one unhappy man who consents to his lot, you would have two? Nay. The one who can only be a brother to you will resign himself to his fate. When we knew that we were not to be so poor as we thought, we had an explanation," he added, looking at the Marquis. "If I am preferred, this fortune of ours goes to my brother. If I am the unhappy one, he will make over the fortune to me, and the title as well, for he will be the Comte de Cinq-Cygne. Whichever way it happens, the unlucky brother will have a chance of an establishment. And finally, if he feels that he is heartbroken, he will go into the army to be killed without casting a shadow on the other two."

"We are true knights of the Middle Ages; we are worthy of our sires!" cried Paul Marie. "Decide, Laurence!"

"We cannot go on like this any longer," added the younger.

"And, Laurence," added the elder, "do not think that there will be no luxury in self-sacrifice."

"My two dearly loved ones, I cannot decide. I love you both as if you were one; as you loved your mother. God will help us. I shall not make the choice. We will leave chance to decide, and I have one condition to make."

"What is it?"

"That the one that shall be my brother afterwards shall stay till I give him leave to go. I wish to be the sole judge of the expediency of his going."

The brothers agreed to this, though they did not understand what was in her mind.

"The first to whom Madame d'Hauteserre shall address a word to-night at dinner, after the *Benedicite,* shall be my husband," continued Laurence. "But there must be no tricks; none of you are to prompt her to ask a question."

"We will play fairly," said Marie Paul, and they kissed Laurence's hand. The decision would soon be made; each of the brothers could believe that it would be in his favor, and their spirits rose high.

"However it is, Laurence dear, you will make a Comte de Cinq-Cygne," said the elder.

"And in our game the one who wins will lose his name," added the younger Simeuse.

"I think, at this rate, that Madame la Comtesse will be a bride before long," said Michu, behind the d'Hauteserres. "The masters are in great spirits. If my mistress makes her choice, I shall stay on. I want to see that wedding."

Neither of the d'Hauteserres answered a word. Quite suddenly a single magpie lighted down between the d'Hauteserres and Michu. Like all children of the soil, Michu was superstitious; it seemed to him that he heard the death-bell tolling. But for the other three the day began gaily enough; when lovers go together through a wood they very seldom see magpies. Michu had brought his map, and found the spot; each of the gentlemen was provided with a pick, and the money was unearthed. The hiding-place was in a lonely spot in the forest, far from any path or human dwelling, and the cavalcade met no one, which was unfortunate; for, grown bold with success, they took a short cut on the journey for the last two hundred thousand francs. The road went past the highest point of the forest, from which you could see the park at Gondreville.

"There is a fire!" exclaimed Laurence, seeing a column of bluish smoke.

"A bonfire somewhere or other," said Michu.

Laurence knew every track and path in the woods; she left

the party and rode at full gallop to the Cinq-Cygne lodge, Michu's old home. The house was empty and shut up, but the gate stood open, and Laurence noticed at once the tracks of several horses. The smoke was rising from a grassy space in the "English park." They must be burning weeds, she thought.

"Ah! you are in it too, mademoiselle!" cried a voice. It was Violette. The man had come at a gallop down the way from the park, and now pulled up at the sight of Laurence. "But it is only a carnival joke, isn't it? They are not going to kill him, are they?"

"Whom?"

"Your cousins don't mean to kill him."

"Kill? Whom?"

"The Senator."

"You are mad, Violette!"

"Well then, what are you doing here?" retorted he. But at the first mention of danger for her cousins, the gallant girl turned and rode back at full speed, and reached the spot just as the last loads were ready.

"Look out! Something is happening, I don't know what. But let us go back to Cinq-Cygne."

While they had been busy unearthing the fortune saved by the late Marquis, a strange scene had taken place at the château de Gondreville.

At half-past two that afternoon the Senator and his friend Grévin were playing a game of chess beside the fire in the great salon on the ground floor. Madame Marion and Madame Grévin were chatting together on a sofa drawn up to the fireside. The servants had all gone over to Troyes to see a curious masquerade long advertised in the arrondissement. The keeper, Michu's successor at the Cinq-Cygne lodge, had likewise gone with his family. The only people in the château, besides the group in the salon, were the Senator's own man and Violette. The gate-keeper and a couple of gardeners were at their posts, but the lodge stood at the entrance to the drive at the further end of the Arcis avenue,



at such a distance that you could not hear a shot fired at the château. On this particular afternoon, moreover, the folk were all on the other side of the house, watching on the threshold in the hope of seeing the mummers come from Arcis, more than a mile away.

Violette was waiting in the great entrance hall for an interview with the Senator and Grévin as to the renewal of his lease, when five men, wearing masks and gloves, burst in upon Violette and the man-servant, gagged them with pocket-handkerchiefs, and tied them down to two chairs in the pantry. Four of the intruders resembled the MM. d'Hauteserre and Simeuse in figure, manners, and gait; the fifth man was like Michu. Quick as they had been about their work, both the victims continued to cry out, and the cry was heard by the party in the drawing-room. The women insisted that it was a cry of alarm.

"Listen!" exclaimed Madame Grévin; "there are thieves in the house!"

"Pooh, some carnival cry," said Grévin; "the mummers are coming to the château."

The dispute gave the five masked intruders time to shut the gates on the side of the great courtyard, and to lock Violette and the man-servant into the pantry. Madame Grévin, a tolerably self-willed lady, persisted in going out to learn the cause of the sound. She fell in with the five masks, and met with the fate of Violette and the man-servant. This done, they burst into the salon, the two strongest grappled with the Comte de Gondreville, gagged him and hurried him off across the park, while the other three, having gagged Madame Marion and the notary, bound them down, each in an armchair. The whole thing was over and done in less than half an hour. The two came back to join the others, and then began a thorough search through the château from garret to cellar. Not a single lock was picked, but every cupboard was opened, and every wall was sounded; the place was at their mercy, in short, till five o'clock that evening. About that time the man-servant succeeded in gnawing through the cords

that bound Violette. Violette, now ungagged, raised the alarm. At the sound of his shouts the five strangers made off across the gardens, mounted horses like those ridden by the Cinq-Cygnes, and escaped, but not so nimbly but that Violette saw them. Violette unbound the man-servant and left him to look after the women and the notary, while he himself bestrode his nag and rode off after the miscreants. When he reached the Cinq-Cygne lodge, to his unspeakable amazement he saw the gate standing wide open, and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, as he supposed, on sentry duty.

The young Countess was away out of sight when Grévin rode up with the rural policeman of the commune of Gondreville, the gate-keeper having found him a mount in the stables, while the gate-keeper's wife went to give notice to the gendarmerie at Arcis. Violette forthwith spoke to Grévin of his meeting with Laurence, and her flight; the depth and decision of that fearless young woman's character was known to them both.

"She was on the lookout," added Violette.

"Is it possible that the Cinq-Cygne nobles can have made the attack?" cried Grévin.

"What!" returned Violette. "Did you not recognize big Michu? He sprang upon me. I felt the weight of his fist, I did. What is more, the horses certainly came out of the Cinq-Cygne stables."

Grévin looked round at the marks of horses' hoofs on the sand, and left the policeman at the gate to keep a watch over the precious footprints, sending Violette to fetch the justice of the peace from Arcis to verify them, while he himself rode back at once to the château de Gondreville and entered the drawing-room. The lieutenant and sub-lieutenant of the gendarmerie had come, with four men and a corporal.

The lieutenant, as might be expected, was the very corporal in whose head François had made a hole two years previously. Corentin had helped him to the name of his mischievous antagonist. This man's name was Giguet. His brother in the army became one of the foremost colonels in the artillery.

and he himself rose by his merit to his rank in the gendarmerie, and subsequently to the command of the Aube division.

The sub-lieutenant, Welff by name, was the man who had served in Egypt. He drove Corentin from Cinq-Cygne to the hunting lodge, and thence to Troyes; and sufficiently edifying tales he heard, by the way, of the "trickery" of Laurence and Michu, as Corentin was pleased to call it.

Consequently, both Giguet and Welff were sure to display no little zeal against the Cinq-Cygnes. Malin and Grévin had both been employed on the Code of Brumaire of the year IV., the work promulgated by the, so-called, National Convention under the Directory; and they had worked together. Grévin, knowing this piece of legislation to the bottom, was able to work the present affair with incredible speed, on the presumption almost amounting to a certainty that Michu, the d'Hauteserres, and the Simeuses were guilty. Scarcely any one now living, save an old magistrate here and there, can recollect the old judicial organization overturned by Napoleon about that very time by the promulgation of his Code, and the institution of the present system.

By the Code of Brumaire of the year IV. the conduct of the prosecution of the misdemeanor committed at Gondreville was entirely in the hands of the Director of the Jury in the department. Remark, by the way, that the Convention struck the word "crime" out of the dictionary of legal terms, and admitted nothing but misdemeanors: misdemeanors against the law, misdemeanors punishable as the case may be by fine, imprisonment, or disgrace, while a fourth series of penalties known as "corporal punishments" included death. The "corporal punishment" of death, however, was destined to be commuted after the Peace to twenty-four years of penal servitude. The Convention, it would seem, held that twenty-four years in a convicts' prison is equivalent to death; what is to be said of the Code Pénal with its "penal servitude in perpetuity"?

The Code Napoléon, even then in process of completion, suppressed the Directors of the Jury altogether, because such

enormous powers were united in their hands. So far as the conduct of the prosecution, and the drawing up of the indictment was concerned, a Director of the Jury was in some sort the agent of the judicial police, the public prosecutor, examining magistrate, and court of appeal, all in one. There was, however, one check upon him: his procedure and indictment were submitted to the commissary of the executive power for his *visa;* and all the facts taken down in examination were laid before a jury of eight, who heard the accused and the witnesses, and finally brought in a preliminary verdict, called the *verdict d'accusation.* As this jury, however, met in the Director's private office, that functionary was pretty certain so to bring his influence to bear upon them that they could only work with and not against him. So much for the *jury d'accusation.* The second jury present in court during the actual trial of the accused, was composed of entirely new names, and called the *jury de jugement* by way of distinction from the first.

As for the Criminal Tribunal (re-named the Criminal Court by Napoleon), it consisted of a president, four judges, a public accuser, and a commissary representing the Government. Still between 1799 and 1806 there were Special Courts, as they were called, empowered to try without a jury, in certain cases and in certain departments; and these Special Courts consisted of judges from the Civil Tribunal. The conflict between special and criminal justice raised questions as to competence which were sent up to the Court of Cassation. If there had been a special court in the Aube, a case of an attempt on the life or liberty of an Imperial Senator would no doubt have gone up before it; but in that quiet department there was no provision for exceptional cases. So Grévin sent off the sub-lieutenant to the Director of the Jury at Troyes. The man that had served in Egypt galloped off post haste to Gondreville, and came back with that all but omnipotent functionary.

The Director of the Jury at Troyes, Lechesneau by name, had formerly been lieutenant of the bailiwick, and a salaried clerk of a committee of the Convention. He was a friend

of Malin's and owed his appointment to him. As an experienced practitioner of the old criminal law, he as well as Grévin had been of great use to Malin in his judicial reforms under the Convention. For which reason Malin had recommended him to Cambacérès, and Lechesneau was appointed a receiver-general of taxes in Italy. Unluckily for his prospects, however, he became involved in an intrigue with a great lady at Turin; her husband threatened to prosecute for the abduction of a child born in adultery, and Napoleon was obliged to cashier the official. Lechesneau, lying under such obligations to Malin, guessed the importance of the attempt, and came over with a picket of twelve gendarmes and a captain.

Before setting out, he naturally asked for an interview with the Prefect. Night was falling, the semaphore was not available, but an estafette was despatched to Paris to report such an unheard-of crime to the Minister of Police, the Chief Justiciary, and the Emperor.

Mesdames Marion and Grévin, Violette, and the Senator's man, with the justice of the peace and his clerks, were all in the drawing-room when Lechesneau came in. The house had already been searched, and the justice of the peace, with Grévin's assistance, was carefully collecting the evidence. The first thing that struck Lechesneau was the profound scheming revealed in the choice of the day and the hour. It was too late to set about seeking circumstantial evidence. At that time of year it is almost dark at five o'clock. Violette had not been able to start sooner in pursuit of the delinquents, and night often means impunity for evil-doers. To choose a holiday when everybody was sure to go to see the masquerade at Arcis, and the Senator equally certain to be at home—did not this insure that there should be no witnesses?

"Let us do justice to the clear-sightedness of the agents of the prefecture of police," said Lechesneau. "They have continually warned us against the nobles of Cinq-Cygne, and told us that sooner or later they would play us some ugly trick or other."

The Prefect of the Aube, meanwhile, was sending estafettes to all the prefectures round about Troyes, with instructions to search for traces of the five masks and the Senator. Lechesneau, feeling sure that the Prefect would take active measures, began by laying down the basis of the legal inquiry. With two such experts as Grévin and the justice of the peace, the work went rapidly forward. The justice of the peace, one Pigoult by name, had been at one time head clerk in the solicitors' office in which Malin and Grévin studied chicanery at Paris. Three months after this affair he was appointed president of the tribunal at Arcis.

As for Michu, Lechesneau knew that he had previously threatened Marion, and knew likewise about the Senator's escape that day in the park. These two facts, the one a consequence of the other, were to constitute the first two counts on the present indictment; they pointed to Michu as the ringleader of the band, and this the more unmistakably since Monsieur and Madame Grévin, Violette, and Madame Marion declared that one of the five masks was exactly like the bailiff. Indeed, the color of his hair, the man's whiskers, and thick-set build made a disguise pretty nearly useless. Who but Michu, besides, could have opened the gates of the Cinq-Cygne lodge with a key? The keeper and his wife, questioned on their return from Arcis, deposed that they had locked both gates before they went; and when the gates were examined by the justice of the peace, assisted by his clerk and the rural policeman, there was no sign of a forcible entrance.

"He must have kept the duplicate keys belonging to the château, when we turned him out," said Grévin. "And he must have been meditating some desperate step," he added, "for he has just sold his land. The purchase was to be completed in twenty days, and the money was paid over the day before yesterday in my office."

"They will have arranged to throw all the blame on him," exclaimed Lechesneau, struck by this circumstance. "He has appeared as their instrument."

Who could know their way about the château better than

the Simeuses and d'Hauteserres? Not one of the attacking party had made any mistake; they had gone straight to the point in a way which showed that they knew quite well what they wanted, and where to find it. None of the locks of the cupboards that they left open had been forced. Therefore they had keys. And strange to say they had not made the slightest disorder. There was no question of theft. Finally, Violette had not merely recognized the horses; he had actually seen the Countess on the watch at the Cinq-Cygne gate. All these facts, taken together with the depositions, afforded strong presumption of guilt against the Simeuses, and d'Hauteserres, and Michu, even for an unprejudiced tribunal; in the mind of the Director of the Jury, the presumption of guilt degenerated into certainty.

Now what should they want with the future Comte de Gondreville? To compel him to give up the estate? It was known that so far back as 1799 the bailiff had said that he had the money ready. The whole aspect of the case was changed at once.

Then Lechesneau asked himself what the object of that diligent search through the château could have been. Revenge was out of the question; the delinquents would have killed Malin outright. Yet, how if the Senator was actually dead and buried? And yet, as he had been kidnapped, he was probably under restraint. Why keep Malin under lock and key after the search had been carried out at the château? Clearly it were folly to suppose that a dignitary of the Empire could be kidnapped and the affair kept a secret for long. The news would spread so swiftly that any possible advantage to be gained by secrecy would soon be at an end.

To these objections, Pigoult replied that justice could never fathom all the motives in the minds of scoundrels. There were points that were never cleared up between the examining magistrate and the criminal; there were depths of conscience in which no human power could throw a light, unless the guilty man chose to confess.

Grévin and Lechesneau nodded assent to this, but none the

less their eyes pored on the darkness through which they were anxious to see.

"And the Emperor pardoned them too!" continued Pigoult, turning to Grévin and Madame Marion. "He struck their names out of the List, though they were mixed up in the last plot against him."

Without further delay, Lechesneau sent off all his force of gendarmerie to the forest and the Cinq-Cygne valley. The justice of the peace was despatched with Giguet, who became, in the terms of the Code, his auxiliary officer of police. The justice's instructions were to collect evidence for the prosecution in the commune of Cinq-Cygne, and to proceed, if necessary, to make all preliminary inquiries. To save time, Lechesneau hurriedly dictated and signed a warrant for Michu's apprehension, in case the facts bore out the case against him. Then, so soon as the gendarmes and the justice had started off, Lechesneau went back to the important work of issuing warrants against the Simeuses and d'Hauteserres, the Code requiring that all the charges against the delinquents should be enumerated in the documents.

Giguet and the justice of the peace came down upon Cinq-Cygne so quickly that they fell in with the servants returning home from Troyes, arrested them, and took them before the mayor. When questioned, they answered in all simplicity, without a suspicion of the importance of the answer, that permission had been given to them yesterday to spend the whole day at Troyes. In answer to the justice of the peace, they all made answer alike that they had not asked for the holiday; Mademoiselle had offered it to them.

The judge thought these depositions so important that he sent Giguet back to Gondreville to ask Lechesneau to come over himself to be present at the arrest of the nobles at Cinq-Cygne, while he proceeded to the farm-house to take the supposed ringleader, Michu, by surprise, so that all the arrests might be made simultaneously. So decisive did these new elements in the case appear that Lechesneau started out at once, with a parting caution to Grévin to keep a strict watch over the prints left by the horses' hoofs in the park.

Lechesneau, Director of the Jury, knew what satisfaction would be felt in Troyes with his proceedings against the *ci-devants,* the "enemies of the people," now become the Emperor's enemies. In such circumstances, a magistrate readily takes mere presumptions for evident proofs. Nevertheless, as Lechesneau drove from Gondreville to Cinq-Cygne, in the Senator's own carriage, it seemed to him that such audacity on the part of Michu and the young people was giddy to the last degree, and scarcely what might have been expected of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's intelligence. Lechesneau certainly would have risen high in his profession but for the weakness which brought him into disgrace in a fit of prudishness on the part of the Emperor. He thought within himself that there was something more in the abduction of a Senator than an attempt to extort a renunciation of Gondreville.

In every occupation—even in criminal investigation—there is something which may be called the professional conscience. Lechesneau's present perplexity arose out of that conscientiousness with which a man sets about any work that he loves, be he artist, man of science, or magistrate. For which very reason, the accused is probably safer with a judge than with a jury; a magistrate is suspicious of everything but reasoning, whereas a jury is apt to be carried away by fluctuations of sentiment. Lechesneau propounded several questions to himself, with a view to getting some satisfactory solution of them by the arrests.

Though all Troyes knew already that Senator Malin had been kidnapped, the news had not reached Arcis by eight o'clock; everybody was at supper when the gendarmerie and the justice were sent for; and as for the valley of Cinq-Cygne, it was impossible that any one there should have heard of it.

And so the château was again surrounded by gendarmes. This time, however, it was not on a political, but a criminal charge; and the compromise that it is sometimes possible to arrange with the one department is quite impossible with the other.

Laurence had only to tell Marthe, Catherine, and la Durieu to stay in the château and neither to go out nor to look out of the windows; they obeyed her to the letter. The horses had been brought as far as the hollow lane opposite the breach in the fosse. Robert and Michu, the strongest of the group, had contrived to carry the bags quietly down through the gap into a cellar under the stairs in the tower called Mademoiselle's Tower. The last journey was made about half-past five, and Michu and the four gentlemen at once proceeded to bury the hoard. Laurence and the d'Hauteserres thought it expedient to wall up the cellar, and Michu with Gothard's help set about the work. Gothard was sent to the farm-house for some cement, left over when the new house was built, and Marthe went home to give him the bags in secret. Michu's new house was on the very knoll from which he saw the gendarmes' caps that November night, and the way to it lay along the hollow lane. Michu, being ravenously hungry, did his work so quickly that the place was walled up by half-past seven. He had sent Gothard for another bag of cement, and finding that he did not want it after all, he hurried home to stop the boy.

Even then they were lying in wait about the house; the rural policeman, the justice of the peace, and his clerk heard his footsteps and hid themselves till he was safely inside. Some way off he saw Gothard with the bag of cement on his shoulders, coming toward the château.

"It is done, boy," he shouted; "take that back, and come in and have supper with us."

Michu's brow was covered with perspiration, his clothes were soiled with cement and earth from the stones taken out of the breach; he was in great spirits as he came into the kitchen where Marthe and her mother had put the soup on the table and were waiting for him.

Just as Michu turned on the tap to wash his hands, the justice of the peace appeared with his clerk, and the policeman behind him.

"What do you want with us, M. Pigoult?" asked Michu.

"In the name of the Emperor and the law, I arrest you," returned the justice of the peace; and the three gendarmes came in, bringing Gothard with them. Marthe and her mother saw the metal rims of the gendarmes' caps and looked at each other in terror.

"Oh, pshaw! What for?" asked Michu, sitting down to the table.—"Give me my supper," he said to his wife, "I am starving."

The justice held out the warrant.

"You know why as well as we do," he said, beckoning to the clerk to come forward and draw up the report.

"Well, Gothard, what are you gaping at? Do you want your supper or do you not? Let them write down their rubbish," said Michu.

"Do you see the state of your clothes?" remarked the justice. "You cannot deny that any more than you can deny what you said to Gothard outside in the yard."

Michu's wife was amazed by his coolness. He ate voraciously and answered no questions; he had a clear conscience and his mouth was full. A dreadful misgiving took Gothard's appetite away.

"Look here," said the rural policeman, in Michu's ear. "What have you done with the Senator? From what they say, it is a matter of life and death for you."

"Oh! my God!" cried Marthe. She had overheard the last few words, and dropped down as if thunderstruck.

"Violette must have played us some ugly trick!" exclaimed Michu, recollecting Laurence's words.

"Oh! so you knew that Violette saw you?" said the justice.

Michu bit his lips and resolved to say not another word. Gothard followed his example. The justice saw that it was useless to try to extract a word from him, Michu's "contrariness" being well known in the countryside; so he ordered the men to tie his hands and Gothard's also, and to bring them to the château. Then he went to join the Director of the Jury.

Laurence and the rest of the party were so hungry, and dinner a matter of such extreme interest, that none of them

changed their dress, but went straight into the drawing-room, she in her habit, and the rest of the party in their white doeskin breeches and green jackets. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre were both anxious enough. The old gentleman had noticed their comings and goings, to say nothing of their evident want of confidence in him, for Laurence could not issue instructions to the elder d'Hauteserres as to the rest of the household. So when one of his sons evaded his questions and took refuge in flight, he spoke to his wife.

"I am afraid Laurence has been cutting out some more work for us."

"What have you been hunting to-day?" asked Madame d'Hauteserre, turning to Laurence.

"Ah! some day you shall hear about the mischief that your children have been in," Laurence answered laughing.

She spoke jestingly, but the old lady shivered at the words. Catherine announced that dinner was ready. Laurence took M. d'Hauteserre's arm, smiling to herself at the mischievous trick that she had played her cousins, for one of them was bound to offer an arm to old Madame d'Hauteserre, their oracle by common consent.

The Marquis led Madame d'Hauteserre to her place. The *Benedicite* was said, and the situation grew so solemn that Laurence and her cousins could feel the violent throbbing of their hearts. Madame d'Hauteserre, as she helped them, was struck with the Simeuses' anxious expression and the agitation in Laurence's sheep-like countenance.

"Something unusual has happened!" exclaimed the lady, looking round at them.

"To whom do you speak?" asked Laurence.

"To all of you."

"For my own part, mother, I am as ravenous as a wolf," said Robert.

Madame d'Hauteserre, still troubled in her mind, handed the Marquis a plate which she meant for his younger brother.

"I am like your mother," she said, addressing him. "I continually make mistakes in spite of your cravats. I thought I was helping your brother."

"You have helped him better than you think for," said the younger Simeuse, turning paler. "He is the Comte de Cinq-Cygne."

He, poor boy, that had been so merry, was to be sadder now for the rest of his days; but he forced a smile as he looked at Laurence, and shut his lifelong regret within himself. In a moment the lover became the brother.

"What!" cried Madame d'Hauteserre, "has the Countess made her choice?"

"No," said Laurence. "We left fate to act for us, and you were the instrument."

She told the history of the morning's agreement, and while she spoke the Marquis, watching his brother's white face, longed to cry out, "Take her, and *I* will go away to die!"

Just as dessert was served, some one outside in the darkness tapped sharply at the dining-room window on the side of the garden. The elder d'Hauteserre opened it, and admitted the curé. His breeches had been torn on the park railings.

"Fly!" he cried. "They are coming to arrest you."

"Why?"

"I do not know that yet; but they are coming to take you into custody——"

There was a general outburst of laughter at this.

"We have done nothing!" the four young men cried out.

"Innocent or guilty, take horse for the frontier. When you are there you can establish your innocence. You may get over a condemnation for contempt of court, but there is no getting over a conviction obtained by popular clamor, a foregone conclusion from the first. Do you remember what Président de Harlay said?—'If I were accused of carrying off the towers of Notre Dame, the first thing I should do would be to run away.'"

"But if you run away, do you not acknowledge that you are guilty?" remonstrated the Marquis de Simeuse.

"Do not fly!" said Laurence.

"Heroic nonsense as usual," cried the curé, in desperation. "If I had God's power for a moment, I would carry you off.

But if they find me here in this state, they will turn my singular visit against you and me; I shall escape by the same way. Consider! There is still time. You are surrounded in all other directions, but they forgot the wall of the parsonage garden."

The curé, poor man, was scarcely gone before the courtyard rang with the clank of sabres and trampling horse hoofs; the Abbé Goujet's advice, it seemed, was to meet with no more success than the Marquis de Chargebœuf's.

The younger brother turned to Laurence. "Our common existence was out of the course of the laws of nature," he said, in a melancholy tone, "and our love is out of the ordinary course of nature, too. This abnormal thing has won your heart. Perhaps it is because natural laws are set aside, that all the stories of the lives of twins are so sad. You see in our own case how persistently fate dogs us. Here is your decision, fatally deferred."

Laurence, in a sort of stupor, heard the Director of the Jury speaking; the ominous words were droning in her ears.

"In the name of the Emperor and the law, I arrest the Sieurs Paul Marie and Marie Paul de Simeuse, Adrien and Robert d'Hauteserre!" He turned to the men with him and pointed out the splashes of mud on the clothes of the accused. "The gentlemen cannot deny that they have spent part of the day on horseback," he said.

"Of what do you accuse them?" Mademoiselle Cinq-Cygne asked haughtily.

"Do you not take mademoiselle into custody?" inquired Giguet.

"I will leave her out on bail, until the evidence against her has been examined more fully."

Goulard offered bail, simply asking the Countess to give her word of honor that she would not escape. Laurence crushed the sometime huntsman of the House of Simeuse with a glance so disdainful that she made a mortal enemy of the man. The tears stood in her eyes, tears of rage that reveal a hell of inward anguish. The four nobles exchanged

stern glances and stood passive. As for Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, in their terror lest Laurence and the young people had been deceiving them, they had sunk into a stupor which no words can describe. They had passed through so many fears for their children and won them back again, and now they sat glued to their armchairs, staring before them with unseeing eyes; listening, and hearing not a word.

"M. d'Hauteserre, is it necessary to ask you to go bail for me?" cried Laurence; the sound of her voice rang out shrill and heart-searching as the trumpet of doom on her old guardian's ears. He understood all. He brushed the tears from his eyes and replied faintly:

"Pardon me, Countess . . . you know that I am devoted to you, body and soul."

Lechesneau had been impressed at first by finding the delinquents quietly at dinner; but his first suspicions returned at the sight of Laurence's thoughtful look, and the dazed faces of the old people. Laurence was trying to guess the snare set for them.

"Gentlemen," Lechesneau said civilly, "you are too well bred to make useless resistance. Will you, all four of you, come with me to the stables? Your horses' shoes must be removed in your presence; they may prove your guilt or innocence in the trial, and will be of importance as evidence. Will you also come with us, mademoiselle?"

Lechesneau had sent for the Cinq-Cygne blacksmith and his boy as experts. While this operation was going forward in the stables, the justice of the peace brought Gothard and Michu to the château. The work of taking off the horseshoes, and sorting and marking them, so as to compare them with the prints left in the park, took some time. Nevertheless, on Pigoult's arrival, Lechesneau left the accused with the gendarmes, and went back to the dining-room to dictate the preliminary reports. Pigoult pointed out the state of Michu's clothes, and related the circumstances of the arrest.

"They must have murdered the Senator and plastered him up in a wall somewhere," concluded the justice of the peace.

"I am afraid so, now," replied Lechesneau. "Where did you get the cement?" he asked, turning to Gothard.

Gothard began to cry.

"He is scared of the law," said Michu. His eyes flashed fire; he looked like a lion caught in a net.

By this time the servants were released by the mayor, and came crowding into the ante-chamber to find Catherine and the Durieus crying together. From them they learned the importance of the admission they had made. Every question put by the Director of the Jury or Pigoult, Gothard answered with sobs. He sobbed so much, in fact, that something like an attack of convulsions came on, and frightened them, and they let him alone. The little rogue, when he saw that they were not watching, looked at Michu and smiled. Michu gave him an approving glance. Lechesneau left Pigoult, and went out to hurry his experts.

There was a pause, then Madame d'Hauteserre at last turned to Pigoult. "Can you explain the reason of the arrest, monsieur?" she asked.

"The gentlemen are accused of carrying off the Senator by main force, and of illegally detaining him in confinement; for, in spite of appearances, we do not go so far as to suppose that they have taken his life."

"And what penalty is incurred by such a crime?" asked old d'Hauteserre.

"Well, since the laws not invalidated by the Code still remain in force, the penalty is death," replied the justice of the peace.

"Death!" cried Madame d'Hauteserre, and she fainted away. At this moment the curé appeared with his sister. Mademoiselle Goujet called Catherine and la Durieu.

"We have not so much as seen your damned Senator!" roared Michu.

"Madame Marion, Madame Grévin, M. Grévin, the Senator's own man, and Violette cannot say as much for you," returned Pigoult, with a sour smile of magisterial conviction.

"I can make nothing of this," said Michu. The answer

stupefied him. Now, for the first time, he began to think that he and his masters had been entangled in some plot woven to take them.

Just at that moment the party returned from the stables. Laurence hurried to Madame d'Hauteserre, and that lady recovered consciousness to say to her, "The penalty is death!"

"Death!" repeated Laurence, looking round at the four. The word spread a dismay, which Giguet, as Corentin's pupil, turned to advantage. He drew the Marquis de Simeuse to a corner of the dining-room. "It can all be arranged even yet," he said. "Perhaps it is only a joke. Why, confound it all, you have been in the army; between soldiers all is understood. What have you done with the Senator? If you have taken his life, there is no more to be said; but if you have imprisoned him somewhere, give him up. You can see yourself that the game is up. I am quite sure that the Director of the Jury will suppress the affair, and the Senator will co-operate."

"We cannot understand your questions in the very least," said the Marquis de Simeuse.

"If you take that tone, the thing will go far," returned the lieutenant.

The Marquis turned to Laurence.

"We are going to prison, dear cousin, but do not be anxious; we shall come back again in a few hours' time. There is some misapprehension; it will be cleared up."

"I wish it may, gentlemen, for your sake," said Pigoult, making a sign to Giguet to remove the four nobles with Gothard and Michu. "Do not take them to Troyes," he said to the lieutenant. "Keep them at the station at Arcis. They must be present to-morrow, with daylight, when the horseshoes are compared with the hoof-marks in the park."

Before Lechesneau and Pigoult went, they examined Catherine, Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, and Laurence. The Durieus, Marthe, and Catherine declared that they had not seen the family since breakfast. M. d'Hauteserre stated that he had seen them at three o'clock.

At midnight Laurence was left in the salon with Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, and the Abbé Goujet and his sister; the four young men who had brought life and love and joy to the château, were gone. For a long time she said no word, and no one ventured to break the silence. Never was grief deeper nor more complete. A sigh at last was heard; it came from Marthe, forgotten in a corner. She rose to her feet.

"Death! Madame. . . . They will just kill them, though they are innocent."

"What have you done?" said the curé. And Laurence rose and went without a word. She wanted to be alone to gather up her strength to meet this unforeseen disaster.

III.

A POLITICAL TRIAL IN THE TIME OF THE EMPIRE

At a distance of thirty-four years, in which great revolutions have taken place, none but elderly people can recollect the prodigious uproar made all over Europe when a Senator of the Empire was kidnapped. The trial of the young men accused of the act roused an amount of interest and curiosity never equaled, save, perhaps, over the case of Trumeau (the tradesman of the Place Saint Michel); the Widow Morin, under the Empire; the Fualdès and Castaing cases under the Restoration; or the trials of Madame Lafarge and Fieschi under the present Government. Such an attack on a member of the Senate brought down the Emperor's wrath; and the tidings of the arrest of the delinquents followed hard upon the news of the misdemeanor and the negative results of inquiries. The forest had been searched far and wide; they had gone all over the Aube and the neighboring departments, and not the slightest trace of their passage, not a single clue to the Comte de Gondreville's place of detention could be found. The Minister of Justice came at a summons from the Emperor (after obtaining information from the police department), and explained the relative positions of Malin and the Simeuses for Napoleon's benefit; and his Majesty, much preoccupied at the time with weighty matters, was inclined to find a solution of the affair in the antecedent facts.

"The young man must be mad," he said. "A jurisconsult like Malin is sure to disavow any document extorted from him by violence. Keep a watch over these nobles, and find out how they set about the release of the Comte de Gondreville." The Emperor bade them proceed as quickly as possible in

dealing with what he regarded, in the first place, as an attack upon his institutions; a fatal example of refusal to acquiesce in the changes brought about by the Revolution; an attempt to open up the great question of the National lands, and an obstacle in the way of that fusion of parties which had come to be the fixed idea of his home policy. He thought, in fact, that he had been tricked by the men who gave their promise to live quietly.

"Fouché's prophecy is fulfilled," he said, remembering the words let fall two years ago by his present Minister of Police. But Fouché had spoken at the time under the influence of the impression left on his mind by Corentin's report of Laurence.

It is difficult under a constitutional government, when nobody takes any interest in a blind, deaf, indifferent, and thankless State, to understand the impetus that a word from the Emperor gave to his administrative machinery. That powerful will of his seemed to compel other things beside men. The word spoken, the Emperor forgot the affair. The Coalition of 1806 took him by surprise. He was thinking of fresh battles to fight; his mind was taken up with massing his regiments so as to strike a final blow at the very heart of the Prussian monarchy; but his desire to see prompt justice done, found a response in the mind of every magistrate in the Empire. They saw themselves in a precarious position. Cambacérès, in his quality of Archchancellor, and Régnier, the Minister of Justice, were even then drawing up a scheme of Tribunals of First Instances, Imperial Courts, and Courts of Cassation. They were discussing questions of custom right, to which Napoleon justly attached so much importance; they were seeking out traces of the *parlements* done away with at the Revolution, and revising the lists of clerks and officials. Naturally, therefore, the magistrates in the department of the Aube thought that any proof of zeal in the affair of the kidnapping of the Comte de Gondreville would be an excellent recommendation. And Napoleon's supposition forthwith became a certainty for courtiers of power and the mass of the nation.

Peace still prevailed on the continent of Europe, and in France people were unanimous in admiration of the Emperor; he cajoled men through their interests and vanity, he coaxed, flattered, and conciliated individuals and public bodies, and everything else, even people's memories. Consequently everybody looked upon a deed of violence as a design against the public good; and the unfortunate and guiltless gentlemen were covered with general opprobrium. A small minority of nobles, confined to their estates, deplored the affair among themselves, but none of them dared to open their mouths. How, indeed, was it possible to stem the outburst of public opinion? The bodies of the eleven men who fell in 1792, shot down from behind the window shutters of the Hôtel de Cinq-Cygne, were dragged from their graves, and the whole department flung them at the heads of the accused. The *émigrés* as a class would wax bold, it was feared, and intimidate the buyers of their property by forcible protests against unjust spoliation. The Simeuses and d'Hauteserres were considered to be brigands, robbers, and murderers; Michu's complicity was especially fatal. Every head that fell in the department during the Terror, had been cut off by Michu or his father-in-law; the most absurd stories were current about him, and the exasperation was so much the more lively because Malin had put nearly every functionary in the Aube into his place. Not a single generous voice was uplifted to contradict the public clamor. The unfortunate prisoners, in fact, had no legal means of combating prejudice; for while the Code of Brumaire of the year IV. submitted the indictment and the judgment to two separate juries, it did not provide the accused with that great guarantee, the right of appeal to the Court of Cassation if there is evidence to show that a trial will be unfairly conducted.

On the day after the arrests were made, the family and servants at Cinq-Cygne were summoned to give evidence before the *jury d'accusation.* Cinq-Cygne was left in the care of the tenant, under the supervision of the abbé and Mademoiselle Goujet, who took up their abode there. Mademoi-

selle de Cinq-Cygne and Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre went to stay in Durieu's little house in one of the great straggling suburbs that spread about the town of Troyes. Laurence saw with a contraction of the heart the fury of the populace, the hatred of the bourgeoisie, the hostility of the administration; it was all brought home to her in the many little incidents which always befall the relatives of the defendants in a trial held in a country town. Instead of encouraging or compassionate words, she heard conversations meant for her to hear; a dreadful, clamorous desire for vengeance. Demonstrations of hate took the place of the strict politeness and reserve required by the occasion; and most of all, she felt the isolation that any one feels in such a case, and so much the more keenly because adversity teaches distrust. Laurence had recovered all her strength. Her cousins' innocence was evident, she despised the crowd too much to be frightened by its silent disapproval. She kept up her companions' courage, thinking all the while of that battle, which to judge from the rapidity of the procedure, must very soon be fought out in the criminal court. But her courage was to sink after an unexpected blow.

In the midst of their troubles, and the turn of the popular feeling against them, just as the unhappy family seemed to be alone in a desert, one man suddenly grew great in Laurence's eyes, and showed all the nobleness of his character. This was the Marquis de Chargebœuf. The day after the *jury d'accusation* returned a true bill, when the indictment, with the formula *Oui, il y a lieu* written at the foot by the foreman of the jury, was sent up to the public accuser, and the warrant was converted into an order for the safe custody of the accused, the Marquis, in his old-fashioned calèche, came bravely to the rescue. Foreseeing that the course of justice was certain to be swift, the head of the house had hurried to Paris, and brought back with him one of the shrewdest and most upright of the *procureurs* of old times. For ten years Bordin had been the attorney of the noblesse, and his successor was the celebrated Derville. The worthy *procureur* at once chose

as counsel the grandson of a President of the Parliament of Normandy, a young barrister who had studied under him, and was aiming at an appointment (and, in fact, after the trial, this young M. de Granville was nominated to an office revived by the Emperor, and became deputy public prosecutor at Paris, and one of the most famous magistrates of our time).

M. de Granville took up the case as an opportunity of distinguishing himself on his first appearance before the public. In those days, barristers (*avocats*) were replaced by officially appointed counsel, so that no case might be left undefended, and any citizen might plead the cause of innocence; but for all that, the accused usually employed a barrister, as before.

The old Marquis was startled by the havoc that sorrow had wrought in Laurence; but he behaved with admirable taste and tact. Not a word did he say of wasted advice. He introduced Bordin as an oracle to be obeyed to the letter, and young M. de Granville as a champion in whom they might put entire confidence.

Laurence held out her hand to the Marquis; her cordial grasp charmed him.

"You were right," she said.

"Will you listen to my advice this time?" he asked.

The Countess made a sign of assent; Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre did likewise.

"Very well. Come to my house; it is in the middle of the town and close to the court-house. You and your counsel will be better lodged there than here, where you are huddled up together and much too far from the scene of action. You would have to cross Troyes every day."

Laurence accepted the offer. M. de Chargebœuf took the two ladies to his house, and all through the trial the Cinq-Cygne party and their counsel stayed there. After dinner, when the doors were shut, Bordin made Laurence tell the whole story exactly as it happened, begging her not to leave out a single particular; although he and the young lawyer had heard it already in part from the Marquis during their journey

from Paris to Troyes. Bordin sat listening, with his feet to the fire, without the slightest assumption of consequence. As for the counsel, young M. de Granville, he was divided between admiration of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the attention he was bound to give to the facts of the case.

"Is that quite all?" asked Bordin, when Laurence had told the whole story of the drama down to that day.

"Yes," said she.

The deepest silence prevailed for some minutes. One of the most solemn scenes in a man's life, and one that seldom comes into ordinary experience, was taking place in that room in the Hôtel de Chargebœuf. Every case is tried by counsel before it comes before a judge, just as every death is foreseen by the doctor before the final struggle with the laws of nature. Laurence, Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, and the Marquis sat with their eyes fixed upon the *procureur's* dark old face, with its deep seams left by the small-pox. Life or death?—he was about to pronounce the word. Laurence glanced at M. de Granville, and saw that he looked downcast.

"Well, my dear Bordin?" said the Marquis, holding out his snuff-box, which the *procureur* took in an absent-minded fashion. Bordin rubbed the calves of his legs (he wore black cloth breeches and black floss silk stockings, and the long coat of the eighteenth century); then he turned his crafty eyes upon his clients, but there was a misgiving in their expression which struck a chill into them.

"Am I to dissect this case," asked he, "and tell you frankly what I think?"

"Pray go on, monsieur," said Laurence.

"All that you have done with good intent turns against you," Bordin proceeded to say. "You cannot save your relatives; you can only try to get them off easily. The fact that you told Michu to sell his land will be taken as proof positive of your criminal designs upon the Senator. You sent off your servants to Troyes on purpose to be alone; it looks so much the more probable because it is the truth. The elder M. d'Hauteserre made a terrible remark to Beauvisage; it will

ruin you all. Something that you yourself said in your own courtyard proves that you have borne ill-will to Gondreville for some time past. As for you, indeed, you were acting as sentinel at the park gates when the thing was done; if they do not proceed against you it is simply because they wish to avoid an element of interest in the case."

"The case is not defensible," said M. de Granville.

"So much the less so because the truth cannot now be told. Michu, the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre are bound simply to assert that they were out in the forest with you for a part of the day, and that they breakfasted at Cinq-Cygne. But if we can prove that you were all there at three o'clock, the time of the deed, who are the witnesses? Marthe, wife of one of the defendants, the Durieus and Catherine, all in your service, and Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, parents of two of the accused. Such witnesses are worthless; the law will not take their testimony against you, and common sense rejects their evidence in your favor. If you were so ill-advised as to say that you had gone out to find eleven hundred thousand francs in gold in the forest, you would send all five of them to the hulks as robbers. The Public Accuser, the jury, the bench, the audience, and every creature in France would think that you stole the gold from Gondreville and shut him up in order to do the deed. Taking the indictment as it stands the case is not clear against you; but given the simple truth, the whole thing looks absolutely transparent; the jury will think that the robbery clears up every obscure point, for a Royalist means a brigand nowadays. As it stands the case points to an act of revenge not inadmissible in the political situation. The accused have incurred the extreme penalty, but that is no disgrace in people's eyes; whereas if you bring the abstraction of specie into the affair, it must seem an unlawful proceeding, and you will lose a certain amount of interest that the public takes in the condemned, so long as the crime appears excusable. If at the very beginning you could have produced your map of the forest, and shown the hiding-places, the tin canisters, and the money, so as to account for

your day, you might possibly have got off before impartial magistrates; but as things are, silence must be kept. God send that none of the defendants have compromised the case; but we shall see what we can make out of their examination."

Laurence wrung her hands despairingly and raised her eyes to heaven in her distress; the depths of the gulf into which her cousins had fallen were opened out before her for the first time. The Marquis and M. de Granville both approved Bordin's terrible discourse. Old d'Hauteserre was crying.

"Why did you not listen to the Abbé Goujet, when he wanted them to fly?" Madame d'Hauteserre cried in exasperation.

"Ah!" exclaimed Bordin. "If you could have saved them and did not do so their death will lie at your door. Judgment for contempt of court gains time. And with time the innocent clear up their affairs. This is the blackest-looking case I have ever seen in my life, and I have seen some tolerably crooked ones, too."

"It is inexplicable for everybody, even for us," added M. de Granville. "If the accused are not guilty somebody else has done this. Five people don't come up by magic in a place, nor are their horses shod exactly in the same way as the horses of the accused, nor do they put Malin in a pit, and make up to resemble the MM. de Simeuse, d'Hauteserre, and Michu, on purpose to ruin them. The persons unknown, the real delinquents, must have had some motive for slipping into the skins of five innocent men; and if we are to find them and discover any traces, we, like the government, should want a system of detectives and a pair of eyes in every commune for twenty leagues round——"

"Which is out of the question," said Bordin, "so it is useless to think of it. Never since justice was invented has any community found out how to put at the disposal of the wrongfully accused the power that the magistrate can use against crime. The machinery of the judicial system is at the disposal of the prosecution but not of the defence. The defence has neither detectives nor police; the power of society is not

available to prove innocence; it is used to prove guilt. Innocence has argument only as a resource; and reasoning that carries weight with the judicial mind is often thrown away upon the prejudiced ears of the jury. The whole country is against you. The eight jurymen who returned a true bill were every one of them proprietors of National land. The *jury de jugement* will likewise consist of officials or buyers and sellers of National lands. In short, we shall have a *malignant* jury on Malin's case, and therefore a complete system of defence is a necessity; keep to it and die in your innocence. You will be condemned. We shall appeal to the Court of Cassation, and we will try to gain time there. In the meantime I can collect proof, and there is still the appeal to mercy left. There you have the anatomy of the case and my opinion on it. If we win the day (for anything is possible in a court of law) it will be a miracle; but of all counsel that I know, yours is most likely to work a miracle and I will help him."

"The Senator is sure to have the key to the enigma," added M. de Granville, "if any one bears you a grudge you always know who it is, and why. Here you see a man leaving Paris at the end of winter, coming alone to Gondreville, shutting himself up with his notary, and, as you may say, playing into the hands of five men who kidnap him."

"His behavior, certainly, is at least as extraordinary as ours," said Bordin; "but how are we to change our position from the accused to accusers, when the whole country is against us? You need good-will to do it, and the help of the Government, and a thousand times more proof than in an ordinary case. I can see malice aforethought of the very subtlest kind in our unknown enemies; they know how Michu and the MM. de Simeuse stand with regard to Malin. To say not a word, to take nothing!—there is prudence for you. There are anything but common criminals behind those masks, I can see! But imagine yourself saying such things as this to the sort of jury they will give us!"

Laurence was amazed and confused by this perspicacity in private affairs, the impersonal clear-sightedness which makes

barristers and some magistrates so great. His remorseless logic clutched at her heart.

"Not ten criminal cases out of a hundred are thoroughly investigated in a court of law; and in a good third probably the mystery is never cleared up. There are cases which remain inscrutable for the prosecution and the defence, the law and the public, and yours is one of them. As for his Majesty, even if the MM. de Simeuse had never wished to overturn his Government, he will not interfere, he has other fish to fry. But who the devil bears Malin a grudge? and why?"

Bordin and M. de Granville looked at one another. They looked as though they doubted whether Laurence had told the truth; and among all the many painful experiences during the trial, that moment of poignant anguish was the worst. She looked at her counsel, and their suspicions died away.

The next day the report of the examination was in the counsel's hands, and they were allowed to communicate with the accused. Bordin informed the family that the accused, as upright men, "were keeping up well," in professional phrase.

"M. de Granville is going to defend Michu," said Bordin.

"Michu?——" cried M. de Chargebœuf, surprised at the change of plan.

"He is the heart of the affair, and that is where the danger lies," returned Bordin.

"If he is the most exposed, the thing seems fair," cried Laurence.

"We can see a few chances," said M. de Granville, "and we shall study them thoroughly. If it is possible to get them off, it will be because M. d'Hauteserre told Michu to mend one of the posts in the fence by the hollow way, and mentioned that a wolf had been in the forest. In a criminal court all turns upon the pleading, and the pleading turns on little things that may become immense, as you will see."

Then Laurence sank into a mental prostration that invariably deadens the soul of every energetic person, when it is apparent that nothing they can do is of any avail. This was no question of compassing the downfall of a man or a govern-

ment with the aid of a devoted band of men; here was no scope for fanatical zeal enveloped in dark mystery. All classes were up in arms against her and her cousins. It is impossible, single-handed, to break open a prison; nor can you effect a rescue when the whole population is hostile to the prisoners, and the police are put on their mettle by the supposed audacity of the accused. Young M. de Granville was alarmed by the stupor that came over the high-spirited, generous girl, a stupor which her appearance exaggerated. He tried to raise her courage, but she answered, "I am waiting and suffering in silence."

The words spoken in such a tone, with such a look and gesture, were among the sublime things that would be famous if spoken on a wider stage. A few minutes afterwards old d'Hauteserre said to the Marquis de Chargebœuf:

"The trouble that I have taken for my two unlucky boys! I had saved till there was an income of nearly eight thousand livres for them, from investments in the funds. If they had only chosen to go into the service they would have taken good positions and might have married very well at this day. And here are all my plans gone to wreck and ruin!"

"How can you think of their interests," said his wife, "when honor and life is involved?"

"M. d'Hauteserre thinks of everything," said the Marquis.

While the party from Cinq-Cygne was waiting for the trial to come on in the criminal court, and making fruitless applications to be allowed to see the prisoners, something of the greatest importance was going on out of sight at the château. Marthe had made her deposition before the *jury d'accusation*, but the Public Accuser thought that her evidence was not worth bringing into the criminal court. The poor woman sat in the drawing-room at Cinq-Cygne, keeping Mademoiselle Goujet company; she had sunk, like many persons of extreme sensibility, into a kind of apathy pitiful to see. To her, as to the curé, and in fact to anybody else who did not know how the accused had spent that day, their innocence seemed doubt-

ful. There were moments when Marthe thought that Michu, with his masters and Laurence, had wreaked their revenge on the Senator. The unhappy wife knew Michu's devotion well enough to see that of all the accused he ran the greatest danger, both on account of his past and the share that he must have had in carrying out the present affair. The Abbé Goujet, his sister, and Marthe lost themselves among the probabilities to which this opinion gave rise, but by dint of dwelling on these thoughts their minds began to attach a certain significance to them. The condition of suspended judgment required by Descartes is as hard to obtain in the human mind as a vacuum in nature; and the mental process which secures the result is something as abnormal and artificial as the action of an air-pump. People have an opinion of some sort under any circumstances. And Marthe was so afraid that the accused were guilty that her dread amounted to a belief. That frame of mind proved fatal.

Five days after the arrest, just as she was going to bed about ten o'clock, she heard her name called from the courtyard; her mother had walked over from the farm.

"There is a workman come from Troyes with a message for you from Michu," she said; "he is waiting for you in the hollow way."

Both the women took the short cut through the breach. It was so dark in the lane that Marthe could only see a man's form looming through the shadows.

"Speak, madame, so that I may know if you really are Madame Michu," said a somewhat uneasy voice.

"I certainly am. What do you want with me?"

"Good," said the stranger. "Give me your hand; do not be afraid of me." Then he bent forward and whispered, "Michu sent me with a word or two for you. I am one of the jailers; if they found out that I have been absent it will be the ruin of us all. Trust me. Your good father found me my place in time past; so Michu counted on me."

He slipped a letter into Marthe's hand, and vanished among the trees without waiting for an answer. Something

like a shiver ran through Marthe as she thought that now, no doubt, she should know the secret. She ran to the farm with her mother, and locked herself in to read the letter.

"MY DEAR MARTHE,—You may reckon on the discretion of the bearer; he can neither read nor write. He is one of the staunchest Republicans of the Babeuf conspiracy. Your father often made him useful, and he looks on the Senator as a traitor. Well, now, dear wife, we have shut up the Senator in the vault where the masters were hidden once before. The wretch has only victuals enough for five days, and as it is to our interest that he should live, take him provisions to last for another five days at least, as soon as you have read these few lines. The forest is certain to be watched, so be as careful as we used to be when the young gentlemen were in hiding. Do not speak to Malin; do not say one single word; and put on one of our masks; you will find it lying on the cellar steps. You must keep the most absolute silence on this secret that I am obliged to tell you. Not a word of it to Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, or she might show the white feather. Fear nothing for me. We are sure of coming safely out of this affair, and if it comes to that, Malin will save us. Lastly, I need not tell you to burn this letter as soon as you have read it. If any one saw a single line of it, it might cost me my head. Most lovingly yours,

"MICHU."

The only persons who knew of the existence of the hiding-place in the mound in the forest were Michu, François, the four nobles, Laurence, and Marthe herself; so, at least, Marthe was certain to think, for her husband had said nothing to her of his encounter with Peyrade and Corentin. The letter could only come from Michu, and besides, it seemed to be written and signed by him. If Marthe had gone at once to her mistress and the two lawyers, who knew that the accused were not guilty, the crafty *procureur* might have gained some light on the treacherous stratagem that had taken his clients; but, like

most women, Marthe acted on her first impulse, and saw the force of the obvious considerations. She threw the letter into the fire. Yet, some unaccountable flash of prudence led her to rescue the blank half of the sheet and the first few lines. There was nothing there to compromise any one. She sewed the scrap of paper into her dress.

Then she thought with no little dismay that the prisoner had been without food for twenty-four hours, and resolved to take meat and bread and wine to the vault that very night. Curiosity and humanity alike forbade her to put off the errand till to-morrow. She heated the oven to bake a couple of round loaves, which she made herself, and with her mother's help prepared a game pasty and rice pudding, and roasted a couple of fowls. About half-past two that morning, she packed the provisions and two bottles of wine in a basket, strapped it about her shoulders, and set off through the forest, taking Couraut with her. The dog made an admirable scout, scenting a stranger at a great distance, and returning to his mistress with a low growl, and muzzle turned to the dangerous quarter.

It was nearly three o'clock that morning when Marthe reached the pool and left Couraut on guard. It took nearly half an hour to move the stones from the opening. She found the mask on the step as the letter said, and entered the vault with a dark lantern. Apparently the Senator's imprisonment had been arranged a long while beforehand. There was an opening which Marthe had not seen on former visits; a hole about a foot square had been roughly contrived in the door, while the bolt was secured by a padlock, lest Malin, with a prisoner's time and patience at his disposal, should succeed in reaching it from within.

The Senator had risen from his bed of moss and heaved a sigh; he guessed at the sight of a masked figure that he was not yet to be set at liberty. He watched Marthe as well as he could by the uncertain light of the dark lantern till at last he recognized her. He knew her by her dress, her stout figure, and her movements, and when she passed the pasty through

the hole he let it fall to catch her by the hands. Swiftly as might be he tried to pull two rings from her fingers, her wedding-ring and a little keepsake given her by Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne.

"You cannot deny that you are Madame Michu, my dear madam," he exclaimed.

At the touch of the Senator's fingers, Marthe clenched her fist and dealt him a vigorous blow in the chest. Then, without a word, she cut a sufficiently strong stick, and the Senator received the rest of his provisions on the end of it.

"What do they want with me?" he asked.

Marthe hurried away without replying. She had nearly reached home, towards five o'clock, when Couraut gave warning of the unwelcome presence of some one on the skirts of the forest. Retracing her steps, she went toward the lodge that had been her home for so many years; but as she came out into the avenue the Gondreville park-keeper saw her in the distance, and she at once decided to go straight toward him.

"You are out very early, Madame Michu," was his greeting.

"We are so unlucky that I have to do a servant's work, myself," she said. "I am going to Bellache for some seeds."

"Then have you no seeds at Cinq-Cygne?" asked he.

Marthe did not answer. She went on to Bellache and asked Beauvisage to let her have several kinds of seeds. "M. d'Hauteserre had told her to try a change of strain," she said. Marthe had no sooner gone than the Gondreville keeper came over to the farm to know why she had been there.

Six days afterwards Marthe took the provisions at midnight, so as to avoid keepers. She had learned prudence. Evidently they were watching the forest. A third time she took food to the Senator. The trial had begun, and it was with something like panic that she listened while the curé read the report aloud.

She took the abbé aside, made him swear to keep her secret as if it were told in confession, showed him the rescued fragments of Michu's letter, and told him where the Senator lay

hidden. The abbé asked at once whether Marthe had other letters in her husband's handwriting to compare with the burnt scrap; and Marthe went back to the farm on this errand, to find a summons to appear as a witness in the case. When she came back to the château, she heard that the Abbé Goujet and his sister had been likewise summoned by the defence, and all three of them were obliged to set out at once for Troyes. In this manner all the actors in the drama, and even those that might be called the supers, were all assembled on the stage where the fate of two families was at stake.

There are very few places in France where the surroundings of justice contribute to that impressiveness which should never be lacking. Religion and kingship apart, is not the judicial system the most important piece of social mechanism? Everywhere, even in Paris, the shabbiness and bad arrangement of the premises and the lack of a proper setting diminish the effect of the enormous power of the law upon the imagination of a people more vainglorious, more fond of spectacular display in public buildings, than any other nation of modern times.

The arrangements are almost the same everywhere. You enter a long rectangular hall, with a desk covered with green baize at the further end on the slightly raised platform where the judges sit in ordinary armchairs. The Public Accuser's seat is placed to the left, just beyond the jury-box, a space enclosed along the wall, and provided with chairs for the jury. The accused, and the policemen on duty sit on a bench in a similar enclosed space against the opposite wall, the counsel for the defence is immediately below, and in front of the prisoners. Below the platform, at a table covered with documents relating to the case, sits the clerk of assize; and (before the Emperor remodeled the courts) the commissary for the government and the Director of the Jury used to sit each at a table on either side of the judges' desk. Two ushers of the court hover about in the space left for witnesses. A wooden balustrade connects the jury-box with the dock at the lower end, forming an enclosure where benches are placed for wit-

nesses that have given their evidence, and a few privileged auditors; while a shabby gallery above the entrance door, and opposite the judges, is reserved for the accommodation of the authorities, and ladies, and others admitted by the President who regulates these matters. As for the unprivileged public, they are allowed to stand in the space between the wooden balustrade and the entrance.

The Criminal Court of Troyes looked like any tribunal or assize court of the present day. But in 1806, neither the President nor the four judges who composed the court, nor the Public Accuser, nor the Director of the Jury, nor any one else except the gendarme wore any distinctive dress or badge of office to relieve the general bareness of the place, and tolerably insignificant countenances. The crucifix was lacking, with its moral lesson for the judges and the accused. Everything was dismal and commonplace. The pomp and circumstance so necessary in the interests of the body social, perhaps afford a certain solace to the criminal. People flocked eagerly to the trial, as they always have done on such occasions, and always will do, so long as manners and customs remain unreformed; so long as France fails to discern that while publicity is by no means secured by the admission of the public, the trial, on the other hand, becomes an ordeal, painful beyond measure; how painful, no legislator can have imagined or it would never have been inflicted. Manners and customs are often more cruel than the law. The manners of the time are the outcome of human nature; the law is framed by the intellect of the nation, and customs not seldom irrational are stronger than law.

A mob had gathered about the court-house. The President was obliged to have the doors guarded by the military, as is usual during sensational trials. Inside, the space between the door and the balustrade was crowded with people so tightly packed that they could scarcely breathe.

M. de Granville appeared for Michu, and Bordin for the MM. de Simeuse, while a local barrister represented Gothard and the MM. d'Hauteserre, the least compromised among the

accused. All three lawyers were at their posts before the proceedings began. Their faces inspired confidence; a doctor never allows a patient to see his misgivings, and a lawyer always shows his client a hopeful countenance. These are the rare cases when insincerity becomes a virtue.

There was a murmur in favor of the four young men when the prisoners came into court, looking somewhat paler for the twenty days of confinement and suspense. The close resemblance between the twin brothers excited the highest degree of interest in them. Perhaps each one thought that Nature should have taken an especial care of one of her most curious rarities, and felt tempted to atone for one of the oversights of fate. Their noble, simple bearing, without a trace of either shame or bravado, impressed the women not a little. All four of the gentlemen and Gothard appeared in the costume in which they were arrested, but Michu's clothes being part of the evidence, he wore his best—a blue greatcoat, a brown velvet "Robespierre" waistcoat, and a white cravat. The poor man paid the penalty of his sinister looks. A murmur of horror broke from the audience if he made any chance movement, or turned his keen, bright, tawny eyes on them. They were inclined to see the finger of God in his appearance in the dock, whither his father-in-law had sent so many victims. And he, with true magnanimity, looked at his masters and repressed an ironical smile. "I am doing you harm," his eyes seemed to say. Five of the prisoners exchanged cordial greetings with their counsel. Gothard still acted the idiot.

After the counsel for the defence had judiciously used their right to challenge some of the names on the jury (the Marquis de Chargebœuf had the courage to sit between M. Bordin and M. de Granville to give information on this point), the panel was completed, the indictment read over, and the accused separated for examination. Their answers were remarkably similar. They had ridden out in the forest all morning, returning at one o'clock to breakfast at Cinq-Cygne. Afterwards, between three and half-past five, they

were again in the forest. This was the substance of all their statements; the details varied with the particular circumstances in each case. The MM. de Simeuse, for instance, asked by the President why they had gone out so early in the morning, separately declared that since their return home they had had thoughts of buying Gondreville; that, as Malin came down on the previous day, they meant to treat with him, and had gone out with Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and Michu to make a survey on which they meant to base their offer. Meanwhile the MM. d'Hauteserre, with their cousin and Gothard, had gone after a wolf that some of the peasants had seen. If the Director of the Jury, who found the hoof-marks in the park at Gondreville, had taken as much pains to find the prints left in the forest, they could have shown that they had been far away from the château at the time.

The examination of the MM. d'Hauteserre confirmed these statements, which agreed with their previous examinations by the magistrate. Obliged to give some reason for their excursion, each of them separately hit upon the idea of a hunting party. Some peasants had seen a wolf in the forest a few days before, and each of them took this as a pretext.

Still the Public Accuser made the most of the discrepancies between the present and the preliminary examinations, when the MM. d'Hauteserre deposed that they all were hunting together. Now it seemed that the d'Hauteserres and Laurence de Cinq-Cygne had gone hunting, while the MM. de Simeuse had been surveying the forest.

M. de Granville pointed out, that, as the misdemeanor was committed some time between two and half-past five, the accused must be believed when they accounted for the way in which they had spent the morning.

To this, the Accuser replied that it was to the prisoners' interest to conceal their preparations for the illegal detention of the Senator.

Then the skill with which the defence was conducted became apparent to all eyes. Judge, jury, and spectators soon saw that victory would be hotly disputed. Bordin and M. de

Granville seemed to be provided for all contingencies. Innocence is bound to give a clear and plausible account of its actions; and therefore it is the duty of the counsel for the defence, to oppose a probable romance to the improbable romance invented by the prosecution. If the prisoner's counsel believes in his client's innocence, he shows that the case for the prosecution is a myth. The public examination of the four nobles gave a sufficient and favorable explanation of the matter. So far all went well. But Michu's examination was a more serious affair, and on that the battle closed. Every one now understood why M. de Granville had chosen to defend the servant rather than the masters.

Michu admitted that he had threatened Marion, but flatly denied the violence attributed to his threats. As to lying in wait for Malin, he said that he had simply been walking in the park; the Senator and Grévin might have been frightened by the sight of the muzzle of his gun and taken it as a threat when no threat was intended. He pointed out that if a man is not used to handling a gun, he may imagine that the muzzle is pointed at him, when, as a matter of fact, it is resting on the owner's shoulder; and he accounted for the condition of his clothes, by the fact that he had a fall as he climbed the gap on his way home.

"It was too dark to see to climb," he said; "I clutched at the stones to hoist myself up to the hollow way, and some of them came tumbling down on me."

Questioned as to the cement that Gothard was carrying, he replied now as on all previous occasions, that it was wanted to fix one of the gate-posts at the top of the hollow way.

The Public Accuser and the President both asked him how he came to be in the gap in the fosse, when he had been mending the gate at the other end of the way, especially as the justice, the gendarmes, and the rural policeman all declared that they heard him come up the lane. Michu replied that M. d'Hauteserre had blamed him for not doing the little job before, because the commune might raise difficulties about the right of way. So he had gone to the château to say that the gate-post had been mended.

M. d'Hauteserre, as a matter of fact, had put a gate across the hollow lane to prevent the commune from claiming the right of way; and Michu, seeing how important it was to account for the state of his clothes and the use of the cement which he could not deny, had invented this subterfuge. If the truth often looks like fiction in a court of law, fiction, on the other hand, often looks like truth. Both the prosecution and the defence attached great importance to the statement; and all the efforts of the defence, all the suspicions of the Public Accuser, centered about this capital point.

Gothard, prompted no doubt by M. de Granville, admitted that Michu told him to fetch some bags of cement; hitherto he had always begun to cry as soon as any questions were put to him.

"Why did not you or Gothard take the justice of the peace and the policeman to the gate at once?" asked the Public Accuser.

"I never thought that it was to be a question of life and death for us."

All the prisoners except Gothard were removed. When the boy was left alone in the dock the President advised him to tell the truth, in his own interests, reminding him that his pretence of idiocy had broken down. Not one of the jury mistook him for an idiot. If he refused to tell what he knew he laid himself open to heavy penalties; whereas by telling the truth, he would probably clear himself. Gothard began to cry, wavered, and said at length that Michu had told him to bring several bags of cement; but that each time he met him near the farm. They asked how many bags he had brought down.

"Three," he said.

At this a dispute began between Gothard and Michu as to the number of the bags. Were there three, counting the bag that Gothard was bringing at the time of his arrest, or three besides the last? The point was decided in Michu's favor. The jury held that only two bags had been used, and it seemed that they had made up their minds on that score al-

ready. Bordin and M. de Granville thought it advisable to give them a surfeit of cement till they grew so confused and weary of it that they understood nothing. M. de Granville in conclusion suggested that experts should be appointed to examine the condition of the posts.

"The Director of the Jury," urged the defence, "was satisfied to inspect the place not so much to obtain the unbiased opinion of experts, as to find proofs of foul play on Michu's part. But in our opinion he failed in his duty; and his error should not be turned to our disadvantage."

The court accordingly appointed experts to discover whether a post had recently been set. The Public Accuser, on the other hand, tried to turn the circumstance to account before the inquiry was made.

"So you chose a time of day when it is almost dark, to fix a post, and to do it all by yourself?" he asked Michu.

"M. d'Hauteserre had given me a scolding."

"But if you used cement over it, you must have taken a trowel and a hod. Now, if you went off so promptly to tell M. d'Hauteserre that you had carried out his orders, it is impossible to explain how Gothard came to be bringing you more cement. You must have gone right past your house, and in that case you could have left your tools there and spoken to Gothard."

The argument came like a thunderbolt. There was a dreadful silence in the court.

"Come now," said the Public Accuser, "confess; that hole was not dug for the post——"

"Then do you suppose it was for the Senator?" asked Michu, with intense irony in his tones.

M. de Granville formally called the Public Accuser to order on this point. Michu was accused not of murder, but of kidnapping and false imprisonment. Nothing could be more serious than such a question. By the Code of Brumaire of the year IV., the Public Accuser was forbidden to bring up any new charge in the course of the trial; he was bound to keep to the indictment, or the trial would be annulled.

The Public Accuser replied to the effect that Michu, the prime mover in the affair, had taken all the responsibility on his own shoulders, to save his masters; and that he might very well have been obliged to block up the entrance to the place as yet unknown, where the Senator groaned.

Closely pressed with questions, worried in Gothard's presence, and made to contradict himself, Michu brought down his fist with a bang on the ledge of the dock.

"I have had nothing to do with kidnapping the Senator," he said. "I incline to think that his enemies have simply shut him up somewhere; but if he makes his appearance, you will see that the cement could not possibly have come into the affair at all."

"Good!" said M. de Granville, addressing the Public Accuser, "you have done more in my client's defence than anything I can say."

The court rose, after a bold assertion which took the jury by surprise, and told for the defence. The bar of Troyes and Bordin greeted Michu's young counsel with enthusiastic congratulations. The Public Accuser was disturbed in his mind. He was afraid that he had fallen into some trap; and, as a matter of fact, he had walked into a snare very skilfully set for him by the defence, in which Gothard had just distinguished himself. Wags in the town said that the case had been patched up; that the Public Accuser had made a botch of the business, and the Simeuses had been whitewashed. Anything in France is fair game for a jest,—a jest rules the nation. Your Frenchman cuts his joke on the scaffold, in the Beresina, at the barricades; probably, even on the Day of Judgment, there will be one or two that will make an epigram here and there.

Next day the witnesses for the prosecution were called. Madame Marion, Madame Grévin, Grévin himself, the Senator's man, and Violette made depositions as might be expected. All of them showed more or less hesitation as to the four nobles; all were quite certain as to Michu. Beauvisage repeated the words let fall by Robert d'Hauteserre; the peas-

ant, who came for the calf, deposed to having heard Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's remark about burning Gondreville. The blacksmiths were called, and confirmed their previously given evidence as to the horseshoes from the Cinq-Cygne stables, which exactly fitted the prints left by the park gate. Naturally, there was a hot battle over this fact between M. de Granville and the Public Accuser. The Cinq-Cygne blacksmith was summoned by the defence, and it came out in the course of the examinations, that precisely similar horseshoes had been sold a few days previously to persons unknown in the country. The smith likewise declared that he shod plenty of horses in that fashion besides those from Cinq-Cygne. Finally, Michu's horse happened to have been shod at Troyes, and the prints could not be found among the others in the park.

"Michu's double did not know that," said M. de Granville, looking at the jury, "and the prosecution has failed to prove that we used one of the horses from the château."

With withering emphasis he disposed of Violette's evidence as to the horses. The man had seen them at a distance with their tails turned toward him. But in spite of incredible efforts made on Michu's behalf, the weight of circumstantial evidence against him was too strong. The Accuser, the public, the court, and the jury, all felt alike that the servant's guilt once proven, the master's connivance was a necessary deduction. Bordin had rightly guessed where the knot lay when he appointed M. de Granville to defend Michu; but by so doing, the defence owned the weak points of their case. Meantime, everything concerning the ex-bailiff of Gondreville, became a matter of palpitating interest.

Michu's demeanor was superb throughout. He displayed all the sagacity with which nature had gifted him; the public could not choose but see that this was no ordinary man, and, strange to say, for that very reason people felt the more convinced that he was guilty. The witnesses for the defence carried less weight with the jury than the witnesses for the prosecution; the former appeared to do their duty, and were

heard as a matter of duty. In the first place, neither Marthe nor Monsieur nor Madame d'Hauteserre could be sworn; Catherine and the Durieus, as domestic servants, were in the same predicament. M. d'Hauteserre said that he had in fact ordered Michu to reset a post that had been overturned. The experts' report, read at this juncture, confirmed old M. d'Hauteserre's testimony, but at the same time it told in favor of the Director of the Jury, for it was stated that the commission found it impossible to say when the work was done; the post might have been mended at any time within the last six weeks.

Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's appearance excited the keenest interest, but the sight of her cousins in the dock, after a separation of twenty-three days, affected her so violently that she looked guilty. She felt a dreadful longing to be beside her twin cousins. She said afterwards that it was all that she could do to fight down a furious desire to kill the Public Accuser that she too might stand beside them—a criminal in the eyes of the world. But she told quite simply how she had seen the smoke in the park, as they went back from Cinq-Cygne, and thought that something must be on fire. For some time she had thought that they were burning weeds.

"And yet," she said, "I will call your attention to something which I only remembered afterwards. The folds of my collar and the loops of braid on my habit were filled with ashes, like burnt papers carried by the wind."

"Was there a considerable volume of smoke?" asked Bordin.

"Yes," replied Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. "I thought that something was on fire."

"This may change the whole aspect of the case," said Bordin. "I make application to the court for an order for the immediate investigation of the place where the fire was seen."

The President granted the order.

Grévin, recalled by the defence, declared that he knew nothing on this head. But Bordin and Grévin exchanged glances which let the light into the minds of either.

"So that is where the gist of it lies!" the old *procureur* said to himself.

"They are on the scent!" thought the notary.

But the shrewd, crafty pair knew equally well that the investigation was useless. Bordin knew that Grévin would be as close as a wall, and Grévin congratulated himself on having cleared away all traces of the fire. The experts and Pigoult were commissioned to search the park so as to settle the point, a side issue as it seemed, and a puerile matter; albeit, it is of capital importance in the rehabilitation which history owes to the accused. They declared that they found no traces of a fire anywhere. Two laborers, produced by Bordin, deposed that by the keeper's orders they had dug over a piece of burnt turf; what had been burned there they could not say. The keeper, recalled by the defence, said that as he went past the château on his way to see the masquerade at Arcis, the Senator told him to dig over a bit of meadow which he (Malin) had noticed that morning as he walked out.

"Had they burned weeds or papers there?"

"I saw nothing to lead me to suppose that papers had been burned," said the keeper.

The depositions of Mademoiselle Goujet and the curé of Cinq-Cygne made a good impression. As they walked toward the forest after vespers, they had seen the party with Michu riding out from the château. The abbé's position and principles lent weight to his words.

The Public Accuser's address to the jury was the ordinary speech made on such occasions. He felt secure of a condemnation. The accused were incorrigible enemies of France, French institutions, and French laws. They thirsted for disorder. They had been mixed up in plots against the Emperor's life; they had been in the Army of Condé; and yet that magnanimous sovereign had struck their names out of the list of *émigrés*. And this was how they repaid his clemency! —Out came all the oratorical flourishes used afterwards under the Bourbons against the Bonapartists, and again, at a later day, under the Orléans branch, against Republicans and Legitimists alike. Commonplaces, which might have had some meaning under a long-established government, must seem

comic, to say the least, when history finds them in the mouth of the public prosecutor through every political change. The old saying that arose out of more ancient troubles might be applied here—"The sign is changed, but the wine is the same as ever!" The Public Accuser (in this instance one of the most distinguished lawyers in the service of the Imperial Government) maintained that the misdemeanor was a sign of the times, an indication of a deliberate intention on the part of the returned *émigrés* to protest against the occupation of their forfeited estates. He made his audience shudder duly over the Senator's present position. Then, his ingenuity stimulated by the certain prospect of a reward for his zeal, he piled up proofs, semi-proofs, and probabilities in one accumulation, and sat quietly awaiting his adversaries' fire.

This was the first and last criminal case in which M. de Granville appeared for the defence; but it made his reputation. In the first place, he opened his pleading with that irresistible eloquence which we of to-day admire so much in M. Berryer. What was more, he was convinced that his clients were not guilty, and genuine conviction carries a force with it that nothing else can give.

The principal points of a defence, which the newspapers of the day reported in full, were as follows:

He began by putting Michu's life in its true light. It was a noble story to tell; the vibrations of the greatest and highest feeling in it roused the sympathies of many. Michu sat listening to his rehabilitation by that eloquent voice, and at times the tears overflowed the tawny eyes and trickled over his stern face. At that moment he looked as he really was,—simple and crafty as a child, and yet a man whose whole life had been ruled by one thought. Suddenly he had become comprehensible, and his tears completed the revelation. The effect produced upon the jury was great. The adroit counsel for the defence seized his opportunity to discuss the indictment.

"Where is the substantial proof of the charge? Where is

the Senator?" he asked. "You accuse us of imprisoning him and even of walling him up with stones and cement. But in that case we alone know where he is; and as you have kept us in prison for twenty-three days he must be starved to death by this time. We are murderers, and you have not charged us with murder. . . . But, if he is alive, we have accomplices; and if we had accomplices and the Senator is still alive, could we not produce him? When the intentions that you attribute to us have miscarried, why should we aggravate our position, since there is nothing to be gained by it? Repentance might possibly buy pardon now that we have failed; and yet we are supposed to persist in detaining a man from whom we can get nothing! Is not this absurd? You may take away your cement; it fails in its effect," he continued, addressing the Accuser. "We are either stupid criminals (which you do not believe) or innocent men, victims of circumstances inexplicable for us as for you. You had far better have looked for that mass of papers burned in the Senator's grounds. That fact shows that there is some reason more pressing than your hypothetical one, some other way of accounting for his illegal detention——"

Into these suppositions M. de Granville entered with wonderful skill. He dwelt upon the high character of the witnesses for the defence, witnesses whose lively religious faith argued a belief in the future and eternal punishment. On this head he was sublime; he saw how to make a profound impression.

"What!" said he, "the criminals are quietly dining after their cousin brings the news that the Senator has been kidnapped. The officer sent to arrest them suggests that they should give up the Senator and the affair shall go no further, and they refuse; they do not even know what the charge is."

With that M. de Granville hinted at a mystery; time would provide a clue to it, and the injustice of the accusation would come to light. Once upon this ground he had the audacity and ingenuity to put himself in the place of one of the jury;

he rehearsed his deliberations with his colleagues; he described his distress of mind, when it was discovered that there had been a mistake, and that he had been the means of bringing a heavy sentence upon innocent men; he painted his remorse so vividly and recapitulated all his doubts so forcibly that he left the jury in horrible anxiety.

Juries in those days were not hardened to this kind of appeal; it possessed the charm of novelty, and M. de Granville's auditors were visibly shaken by it. To M. de Granville's fervid eloquence succeeded the wily and specious Bordin. He multiplied considerations, he brought forward all the obscure points, and made them inexplicable. He set himself to make an impression upon the mind and judgment, as M. de Granville had appealed to the imagination and the heart. He succeeded, in fact, in entangling the jury with such earnest conviction that the Public Accuser saw his scaffold falling to pieces. This was so evident that the counsel representing the MM. d'Hauteserre and Gothard, finding there was no attempt to press the charge against his clients, left his case to the discretion of the jury.

The Accuser made application for an adjournment; he would give his rejoinder on the morrow. Bordin, reading acquittal in the eyes of the jury, if they considered their verdict while the effect of the pleading was fresh, objected, on the score of law and fact, to another night of suspense for his innocent clients. In vain. The judges held a consultation.

"It seems to me," said the President, "that the interests of the public equal the interests of the accused. The court could not refuse such an application if made by the defence, without falling short of all ideas of justice; so it must be granted to the prosecution."

"A miss is as good as a mile," said Bordin, looking at his clients. "Acquitted to-day, you may be brought in guilty tomorrow."

"In any case, we can only admire you," said the elder Simeuse.

Tears stood in Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's eyes. She

had not looked for such a success after the doubts of her counsel. People came to congratulate her, and every one made sure that her cousins would be acquitted.

But the whole scene was to be changed by a sudden, startling event,—the most unexpected and ominous occurrence that ever altered the entire aspect of a criminal case.

Senator Malin was found on the highroad to Troyes, at five o'clock in the morning on the day after M. de Granville's pleading! Persons unknown had set him at liberty while he slept, and he was now on his way to Troyes, totally unaware that Europe was ringing with his name, or that a trial was proceeding, and merely glad to breathe fresh air again. If other people were amazed to see the man upon whom the whole drama turned, he was at least as much astounded by the news that they gave him. A farmer lent his cart, and Malin soon reached the Prefect's house at Troyes. The Prefect sent at once for the Director of the Jury, the commissary, and the Public Accuser; and the Senator told his story. A warrant was made out for Marthe's arrest, and she was apprehended while still in bed at the Durieus'. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, at liberty on bail, was likewise snatched from one of her few brief moments of slumber during the long agony of the trial, and detained at the prefecture to be examined. Orders came to the prison; the accused were not to be permitted to communicate with any one,—not even with their counsel. At ten o'clock, the assembled crowd was informed that the court would not sit till one that afternoon.

This change, with the news of the Senator's deliverance, the arrests of Marthe and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, and the isolation of the prisoners, struck dread into the inmost souls of the inmates of the Hôtel de Chargebœuf. It may be easily imagined, too, how the excitement spread among the reporters, and the people who came out of curiosity, till it traveled over the whole town, and even reached the working population. About ten o'clock, the Abbé Goujet came to see Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, and to speak with the counsel; and they all breakfasted together, if people can be

said to breakfast in such circumstances. Afterwards the curé took M. de Granville and Bordin aside, told them what Marthe had said in confidence, and produced the scrap of the letter. The lawyers exchanged glances.

"There is no more to be said! It is all over with us, it seems. Let us at least put a good face upon it," said Bordin.

The Director of the Jury and the Public Accuser combined were too much for Marthe. Proof against her, moreover, was abundant. Lechesneau had sent to search the cell, and the bottom crust of Marthe's last loaf had been found there, with several empty bottles and other things. During the long hours of captivity Malin had made conjecture on conjecture, and sought every least sign of motive on the part of his enemies. Naturally he communicated everything to the magistrate. Michu's farmhouse had only recently been built, and as the oven was new the joints of the bricks in the floor had left a sort of pattern on the crust of the loaf. The bottles, besides, were sealed with green wax, similar, in all probability, to the wax on the bottles in Michu's cellar. These shrewd remarks produced the expected results; the examining magistrate made the identification in Marthe's presence. Lechesneau, the Public Accuser, and the commissary impressed her with the idea that nothing now save full confession could save her husband's life. Their seeming good-nature at a time when proof against her was so overwhelming drew the admission that no one knew of the hiding-place save Michu, the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre, and that she herself had carried provisions to the Senator three times during the night. Laurence was obliged to own that Michu had discovered the hole and showed it to her, as a refuge for the nobles from the police.

As soon as the precognitions were made, intimation was sent to the jury and counsel. At three o'clock the President began by announcing that there were new elements in the case. Michu was confronted with three wine-bottles, and asked if he recognized his property; the prosecution at the same time pointing out that the wax on the empty bottles was precisely

similar to that used to seal a full bottle of wine taken from the farmhouse cellar by the magistrate in Marthe's presence. Michu declined to acknowledge them as his, but the fresh piece of circumstantial evidence told with the jury when the President informed them that the empty bottles had been found in the place where the Senator was confined. Each of the accused was examined separately as to the position of the hole in the ruins of the monastery, till, after all the witnesses had been called on either side, it was established that Michu had discovered the place, and that no one knew of it save Laurence and the four nobles. Judge, then, of the effect produced upon the jury when the Public Accuser announced that this very hiding-place had served as the Senator's prison.

Marthe was called as a witness. The keenest anxiety was felt by the accused and the audience when she appeared; and M. de Granville objected that a wife's testimony could not be taken against her husband. But the Public Accuser pointed out that Marthe, on her own confession, was an accessory after the fact, and that therefore she was neither sworn nor called as a witness; she was to be examined simply in the interest of truth.

"Besides," added the President, "we have only to read the report of her examination by the direction of the jury." And the preliminary report drawn up that morning was accordingly read aloud by the clerk of assize.

"Do you confirm these admissions?" asked the President.

Michu looked full at his wife, and she, understanding her mistake, fainted away. It is no exaggeration to say that this news fell like a thunderbolt upon the accused and their counsel.

"I never wrote a line to my wife from prison," asserted Michu, "and I do not know a single one of the turnkeys."

Bordin handed him the scrap of the letter; Michu had only to glance at it.

"Some one has imitated my handwriting," he exclaimed.

"That is all that is left to you to say," said the Public Accuser.

The Senator was now brought in with the due formalities. His appearance brought about a theatrical change of scene. At the President's bidding, Malin, or the Comte de Gondreville, as the judges called him, pitiless to the previous owners of his splendid home, looked long and earnestly at the accused. He stated that his captors were dressed exactly like the four gentlemen; but added that he was so much confused at the time that he could not positively state that the accused were guilty.

"What is more," said he, "I am convinced in my own mind that these gentlemen took no part in the matter. The hands that bandaged my eyes were rough and coarse. And so," he continued, glancing at Michu, "I should be more willing to believe that my sometime bailiff undertook that office; still, I beg the jury to weigh my deposition carefully. My suspicions are of the very slightest; I do not feel at all sure. And for this reason, the two men who seized and rode off with me, put me behind the man who bandaged my eyes, a red-haired man like Michu. And now, odd as my observation may be, I am bound to make it, for it tells in favor of the accused, and I beg him not to be offended by it. I was tied closely to the man's back, and, quickly as we rode, I noticed the odor of my captor, and it was not that peculiar to Michu. As for the woman who brought me provisions from time to time, I am certain that she was Marthe, Michu's wife. I knew her the first time I saw her, by the ring that Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne gave her; she had forgotten to take it off. The court and the jury will see the contradictions in these facts; I cannot explain them at all as yet."

Malin's deposition was received with unanimous approval and a murmur of applause. Bordin asked leave to cross-examine so invaluable a witness.

"Has M. le Sénateur reason to suppose that his detention might be attributed to other causes than the supposed interests of the accused?"

"I am certain of it," said the Senator, "but what the motive can have been, I do not know; for I can declare that during my twenty days of imprisonment I have not seen any one."

"Then do you think that at the château de Gondreville, there could be any information, titles, deeds, or papers of any importance to the MM. de Simeuse?"

"I do not think so," said Malin. "And even if it were so, I believe the gentlemen incapable of taking them by violence. They had only to ask me for them."

"Did not M. le Sénateur order papers to be burned in the park?" M. de Granville asked abruptly.

Malin looked across at Grévin. It was a sudden, keen glance that did not escape Bordin. Then he denied that he had burned any papers.

When the Public Accuser asked about the Senator's previous narrow escape in the park, and whether he (the Senator) had not been mistaken as to the position of Michu's rifle, Malin replied that Michu was on the watch in a tree. This caused a great sensation, for it confirmed Grévin's testimony. The Simeuses and d'Hauteserres sat unmoved and impassive while their enemy overwhelmed them with his generosity; to Laurence it was agony so intolerable that the Marquis de Chargebœuf again and again caught her arms to hold her back. The Comte de Gondreville withdrew with a bow to the accused. It was not returned,—a little thing that made the jury indignant.

"They are lost!" Bordin whispered in the Marquis' ear.

"Alas! lost through pride, now, as always," returned the Marquis.

"Our task, gentlemen, has grown too easy," said the Public Accuser, rising to address the jury.

He accounted for the bags of cement. They had been used to make the socket for the bolt that fastened the door of the cell in the manner described in the precognition made by Pigoult that morning. He showed, without difficulty, that no one, save the accused, knew of the existence of the hole. He brought up all the fictions of the defence, and pulverized the arguments with the new proofs obtained in this miraculous manner. In 1806, it was too soon after 1793 and the time of the "Supreme Being," to talk of the divine justice; he spared

the jury any allusion to the interference of Heaven. Finally, he added that the authorities would keep watch for the persons unknown who had set the Senator at liberty, and sat down to await the verdict with confidence.

The jury, to a man, were fully persuaded that there was a mystery, but that mystery in their opinion had been made by the accused; the prisoners would not speak out because private interests of the highest importance were involved.

To M. de Granville it was evident that there were machinations of some kind. He seemed, when he rose, to be overwhelmed, and this was in fact the truth, but it was not so much the new evidence that staggered him, as the manifest conviction of the jury. His pleading, perhaps, even surpassed yesterday's effort, for the second address was certainly a piece of closer and more logical reasoning than the first. But the indifference of the jury damped him; he was wasting words, and he knew it. It was a painful and numbing position. He pointed out that the Senator's release, as if by magic, and very certainly without the aid of Marthe or any of the accused, confirmed his previous arguments. Yesterday, surely, the accused might have expected an acquittal; and, if, as the prosecution supposed, they were able to detain or release the Senator, they would not have chosen to set him free till the verdict was returned. He tried to show that enemies concealed in obscurity were the only possible authors of the outrage.

Strange to say, while M. de Granville's words troubled the professional consciences of the judges and the Public Accuser, the jury listened as a matter of form; and the public, usually so ready to believe in the innocence of the prisoner, was convinced that the accused was guilty. There is an atmosphere of ideas. In a court of law the judges and jury feel the influence of the ideas of the crowd, and vice versa. The state of other people's minds can be known or felt, and M. de Granville in his peroration rose to a feverish exaltation due to his conviction that his clients were guiltless.

"In the name of the accused," he cried, "I pardon you in advance for a fatal mistake that nothing can explain. We are

playthings in the hands of some unknown Machiavellian power. Marthe Michu is the victim of a detestable fraud, as people will recognize when the misfortune is irreparable."

Bordin, with the Senator's deposition as a weapon, asked for the acquittal of the four nobles.

The President summed up the more fairly because the jury had evidently made up their minds. He even, on the strength of the Senator's deposition, leaned somewhat to the side of the accused; a piece of clemency which could not injure the case for the prosecution. In accordance with the verdicts declared by the foreman of the jury at eleven o'clock that night, Michu was sentenced to death, the MM. Simeuse to twenty-four, and the two d'Hauteserres to ten years penal servitude. Gothard was acquitted. The whole court tried to see how the five prisoners would bear themselves at the supreme moment when they came in as free men to hear their verdict and sentence. The four nobles looked long at Laurence; she flung them back a martyr's fiery glance from tearless eyes.

"If we had been acquitted she would have cried," the younger Simeuse said to his brother.

Never did accused confront an unjust sentence with quieter brows nor more dignified bearing than these five victims of a villainous plot.

"Our counsel has pardoned you," said the Marquis de Simeuse, addressing the court.

Madame d'Hauteserre fell ill, and kept her bed; for three months she could not leave the Hôtel de Chargebœuf. M. d'Hauteserre went peaceably back to Cinq-Cygne; but he was old, he had none of the distractions of youth to prevent the sorrow of age from eating his heart away. His frequent fits of absence of mind told the curé that the poor father was always on the morrow of that fatal arrest. There was no need to try Michu's beautiful wife. Marthe died in prison three weeks after her husband was sentenced to death. Her son she recommended to Laurence, in whose arms she passed away.

As soon as the decision was known, the Gondreville Mystery passed out of people's minds; amid political events of the highest importance it was soon forgotten. Society, like the sea, finds its level, and falls back into its way again after an upheaval. All trace of a disaster is soon effaced by the fluctuation of moving interests.

Laurence would have given way in those days if it had not been for her firmness of character, and her conviction that her cousins were innocent. She surprised M. de Granville and Bordin by the apparent calmness with which noble natures face the worst. She nursed Madame d'Hauteserre, sitting up with her at night, and every day she spent two hours in the jail. She would marry one of her cousins, she said, when they went to the convicts' prison.

"The convicts' prison!" repeated Bordin. "Why, mademoiselle, there is but one thing to think of now; we must petition the Emperor to pardon them."

"Pardon? and from a Bonaparte?" Laurence cried out in horror.

The worthy old *procureur's* spectacles took a leap from his nose, but he caught them, and took a look at this girl that had grown to a woman all at once. Her character was fully revealed to him. He turned and caught the Marquis de Chargebœuf by the arm.

"My lord Marquis, let us hurry to Paris," he said, "and save them without her!"

The petitions sent up by the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre and by Michu stood first on the list for the new Court of Cassation. Happily the decision was delayed by the inaugural ceremonies.

Toward the end of the month of September, after three hearings of the pleadings, and of the attorney-general Merlin, who appeared in person, the appeal was dismissed. Meanwhile, the Imperial Court of Paris was instituted. M. de Granville received the appointment of deputy attorney-general; and as the department of the Aube came within the jurisdiction of that court, he found it impossible in his official

position to take the necessary steps for the condemned prisoners. But he wearied out his patron Cambacérès. Bordin and M. de Chargebœuf went to his house in the Marais on the day after the decision of the Court of Cassation, and found him in the honeymoon, for he had married in the meantime. But in spite of these various changes, M. de Chargebœuf saw clearly, from the young barrister's distress, that he was true to his clients. There are lawyers, and these are the artists of their profession, who take a case for a mistress. But this does not often happen; the reader had better not count upon it.

So soon as M. de Granville's ex-clients were alone with him in his private room, he turned to the Marquis.

"I did not expect your visit," he said; "I have used up all my credit already. Do not try to save Michu; you will only obtain pardon for the MM. de Simeuse. Somebody must suffer."

"Good Lord!" cried Bordin, holding up the three appeals to mercy, "how am I to take it upon myself to withhold your old client's demand? If I throw this paper on the fire, I might as well cut off his head."

He held out Michu's signature. M. de Granville took it up and looked at it.

"We cannot withdraw it," he said, "but mind this: if you ask pardon for all, you will get nothing."

"Have we time to consult Michu?" asked Bordin.

"Yes. The order for an execution is issued by the attorney-general's staff; we can give you a few days' delay. Men are murdered," he added, with a touch of something like bitterness, "but there are certain forms to be observed, especially at Paris."

M. de Chargebœuf had already been to the Chief Justiciary, and recollections of what he had said gave great weight to M. de Granville's bitter words.

"Michu is not guilty," continued M. de Granville; "I know it, and I say so; but what can one man do by himself with every one against him? And recollect that I am bound now

to be silent. It is my duty to raise the scaffold on which my client's head is to fall."

M. de Chargebœuf knew enough of Laurence to feel sure that she would not consent to save her cousins at Michu's expense. So the Marquis tried one last expedient. He had asked for an audience of the Minister of Foreign Relations, to discover whether diplomacy in high quarters might not afford a way of escape. He went with Bordin, who knew the Minister and had been of service to him several times. They found Talleyrand absorbed in the contemplation of the fire, his feet stretched out before him, his head on his hand, and his elbow on the table. A newspaper lay on the floor. He had just been reading the decision of the Court of Cassation.

"Please sit down, M. le Marquis," said the Minister. "And you, Bordin" (indicating a place opposite him at the table), "write——"

"SIRE,—Four innocent gentlemen, declared guilty by the jury, have just been informed that their appeal is dismissed by your Majesty's Court of Cassation.

"Your Imperial Majesty can only extend mercy to them. The four gentlemen only ask this favor of your august clemency that they may find an occasion of turning their deaths to account in your Majesty's service, by fighting under your eyes, and declare themselves to be respectfully your Imperial and Royal Majesty's" etc. . . .

"Only princes can confer such obligations as this," said the Marquis de Chargebœuf, taking the precious draft of the memorial from Bordin's hands, and vowing inwardly to obtain august support for it.

"The lives of your relatives hang on the fortune of war, M. le Marquis," said the Minister. "Try to time your interview with the Emperor after a victory, and they will be saved."

Talleyrand took up the pen and wrote a confidential letter to the Emperor, and a dozen lines for Marshal Duroc. Then

he rang the bell and asked his secretary for a diplomatic passport.

"What is your real opinion of this affair?" he asked, quietly turning to Bordin.

"Then do you not know, monseigneur, who has entangled us so thoroughly?"

"I think I do, but I have my reasons for wishing to make sure," returned the Prince. Then, turning to the Marquis de Chargebœuf, he added, "Go to Troyes. Bring back the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne with you here to-morrow at this time; but no one must know of her arrival. Go to Madame de Talleyrand's apartments; I will prepare her for your visit. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne shall be placed where she can see a man who will stand in front of me. If she recognizes in him an agent who made the domiciliary visit at Cinq-Cygne, in the time of the conspiracy of MM. de Polignac and de Rivière,—then not a word! not a gesture! whatever I may say or he may answer. Lastly, you must not think of saving any one but the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre; do not try to hamper yourselves with your scapegrace of a gamekeeper."

"A hero, monseigneur!" cried Bordin.

"What! enthusiasm! and in *you,* Bordin? The man must be something indeed!—Our sovereign lord, M. le Marquis, is prodigiously vain; he will dismiss me before long, to carry out his follies without contradiction. He is a great soldier that can control the laws of time and space; but he cannot change men's natures, and he would like to mould them to his uses. Now, do not forget that your relatives' pardon can only be obtained by one person, and that person is Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne."

The Marquis went over to Troyes, alone, and told Laurence how things stood. Laurence obtained permission to see Michu, from the attorney-general. The Marquis went with her as far as the gate of the prison and waited for her outside. When she came out her eyes were full of tears.

"Poor fellow, he tried to kneel to beg me not to give him

another thought, and forgot the irons on his feet," she broke out. "Oh! Marquis, I will plead his cause. Yes, I will kiss their Emperor's boot. And if I fail, Michu shall live for ever in our family; I will see to that. Present the petition for mercy, to gain time; I must have his picture. . . . Let us go."

Next day, when the Minister knew by a preconcerted signal that Laurence was at her post, he rang his bell, and the attendant received orders to introduce M. Corentin.

"You are a clever man, my dear fellow, and I wish to employ you," said Talleyrand.

"My lord——"

"Listen. In Fouché's service you will make money, but you will never gain honor nor a position; but if you continue to serve me as you did just now at Berlin, you will be respected."

"You are very good, my lord——"

"You showed genius in that last business, at Gondreville."

"Of what do you speak, monseigneur?" asked Corentin, neither over-indifferent nor too much surprised.

"Monsieur," the Minister returned drily, "you will never be anything; you are afraid——"

"Of what, monseigneur?"

"Of death!" said the Minister, in those rich, deep, hollow tones of his. "Good-day, my dear fellow."

"It is the man," said the Marquis de Chargebœuf, coming into the room, "but we have all but killed the Countess; she is speechless with anger."

"Nobody else could play such a trick," said the Minister.—"There is a chance, my lord Marquis," continued he, "that your plans may miscarry. Set out as if you intend to go by way of Strasbourg. I will have your passports made out in duplicate, and in the second, the route shall be left blank. Have doubles, change your direction adroitly, and, more important still, change your traveling carriage; leave your doubles to be stopped at Strasbourg in your stead, and travel by way of Switzerland and Bavaria to Prussia. Not a word

to any one, and be careful. You have to do with the police; you do not know what the police is!"

Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne offered Robert Lefebvre a sum sufficient to induce him to come to Troyes to paint Michu's portrait; and M. de Granville undertook to give the famous painter of the day all possible facilities. M. de Chargebœuf set out in the old *berlingot* with Laurence and a manservant who could speak German. But Mademoiselle Goujet and Gothard had started ahead of them in an excellent calèche, and near Nancy the two parties met, and exchanged carriages. At Strasbourg, accordingly, the commissary of police refused his *visa* to the travelers' passport, pleading strict orders. And at that very moment, Laurence and the Marquis left France behind, showing their passports at Besançon.

Laurence crossed Switzerland in early October, without paying the slightest heed to the wonderful scenery through which she traveled. She lay back in the carriage in the torpor that creeps over the condemned man, when he knows that the hour is come. In such hours, all the world is shut out by an eddying mist, and every commonplace thing wears a strange, unfamiliar aspect. The thought, "If I fail, they will die by their own hands in prison," beat in upon her brain, as the blow of the headsman's club falls on the limbs of the victim broken on the wheel. She felt more and more exhausted; she lost all her energy in the suspense as the cruel, swift, decisive moment drew nearer, when she should be face to face with the man on whom the four lives depended. She had made up her mind to give way to languor in the interval, so as to save all her strength. These calculations of a strong nature manifest themselves in different ways. Some loftier souls find relief in unexpected gayety during the supreme hour of suspense. The Marquis could not understand Laurence's mood. Sometimes he feared that he might not bring her alive to an audience, solemn only for the suppliants, yet surely it assumed proportions beyond those of ordinary private life. For Laurence, the thought that she must humble herself to the man

whom she scorned and hated, meant the death of all generous sentiments within her.

"The Laurence that lives on afterwards will be a different creature from this Laurence that is about to die," she thought.

Still, it was very difficult for the travelers to shut their eyes to the great general movement which they felt so soon as they crossed the Prussian frontier. The Jena campaign had begun. Laurence and the Marquis saw the magnificent divisions of the French army passed in review, and deploying here as at the Tuileries. Seen through the pomp and splendor of war,—a splendor that can only be described in biblical language,—the man whose spirit moved those masses of men loomed like a giant in Laurence's imagination. Before long the word victory rang in her ears. The Imperial troops had gained two signal advantages. Prince Frederick Louis of Prussia had been killed at Saalfeld the day before the travelers reached it in their effort to overtake Napoleon's lightning speed.

At last, on the 13th of October, that day of evil augury, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's traveling carriage overtook the main body of the army, and drove along by a river through the middle of the camp. She saw nothing but confusion. They were sent from village to village, from division to division, until she grew alarmed to think that she and the old man with her were drifting hither and thither alone in an ocean of a hundred and fifty thousand men, facing a hundred and fifty thousand of the enemy. Tired of seeing the line of river over the hedge-row by the muddy road along the slope, which they were following, she asked the soldier what it was called.

"The Saale," he answered, and he pointed out the great masses of the Prussian army on the other side.

Night came on. Laurence saw the watch-fires lighted, and the glitter of steel. The old Marquis with chivalrous courage mounted the box-seat beside the new servant, and himself drove the two strong horses purchased the day before. He knew that he should find neither horses nor postilions on a field of battle. The army wondered at the audacious carriage, till a field gendarme brought it to a stand, and rode down upon the Marquis, shouting:

"Who are you? Where are you going? Whom do you want?"

"The Emperor," replied the Marquis de Chargebœuf. "I have an important dispatch from the cabinet for Grand Marshal Duroc."

"Very well. You cannot stop here," said the man. But Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the Marquis were obliged to stop, and so much the more so because it was growing dark.

"Where are we?" Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne asked of two officers who came past, their uniforms hidden by plain greatcoats.

"You are in advance of the French advanced guard, madame," returned one of the officers. "You cannot stay here, for if the enemy moves our batteries will begin to play; you will be between two fires."

"Oh!" she said indifferently.

At the sound of that "oh!" the other officer spoke.

"How comes this woman to be here?"

"We are waiting for a gendarme," said Laurence; "he has gone to announce our arrival to M. Duroc, who will use his influence to obtain an interview with the Emperor for us."

"An interview with the Emperor!" . . . exclaimed the first officer. "Can you think of it on the eve of a decisive engagement?"

"Ah! you are right," she said. "I should wait till the day after to-morrow. Victory will soften him."

The two officers moved away twenty paces toward the horses that were standing quietly, waiting for them to mount; and the calèche was forthwith surrounded by an extremely brilliant array of marshals and officers, who respected the carriage precisely because it was standing there.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the Marquis, "I am afraid that we were speaking to the Emperor."

"The Emperor?" repeated a colonel-general, "why, there he is!"

Then Laurence saw him a few paces away, alone and in front of the others. The officer who exclaimed, "How comes this wo-

man to be here," was the Emperor himself, in a green uniform covered by his famous greatcoat. He had mounted a richly caparisoned white horse, and now with a field-glass in his hand he was intently studying the Prussian army beyond the Saale. Laurence knew why the calèche was allowed to remain and why the Emperor's escort respected it. A sudden revulsion passed through her. The hour had come. But at that moment she heard the dull heavy sound of a moving battery and the tramp of masses of men advancing in quick time, and the guns were put in position on the plateau. The batteries seemed to have a language of their own; the caissons vibrated; the metal gleamed.

"Marshal Lannes and his whole corps to the front! Marshal Lefebvre and the Guard to occupy the summit!" said the other officer—Major-General Berthier.

The Emperor dismounted. At the first sign, his favorite mameluke Roustan ran forward to hold the horse. Laurence was stupid with astonishment. She could not believe that all this could happen so simply.

"I shall spend the night here on the plateau," said the Emperor.

As he spoke, Grand Marshal Duroc, whom the gendarme at last had managed to find, came up to the Marquis de Chargebœuf and asked the reason of his arrival. The Marquis replied that a letter from the Minister of Foreign Relations would explain how urgently necessary it was that he and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne should obtain an audience of the Emperor.

"His Majesty is about to dine in his bivouac, no doubt," said Duroc, as he took the letter. "I will see what it is all about and let you know if it can be done.—Corporal! go with this carriage and lead the way to the hut in the rear."

M. de Chargebœuf followed the field gendarme and came to a stand before a miserable hut built of earth and wood. A few fruit-trees grew about the place, which was guarded by pickets of horse and foot.

Seen from the top of the hill the majesty of war might be

said to shine out in all its grandeur, for the lines of both armies lay out below in the moonlight. An hour went by, amid continual coming and going of aides-de-camp, till Duroc came himself and made Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the Marquis enter the hut. The floor was of trampled earth like a barn floor. Dinner had just been removed from the table, at which Napoleon was sitting on a rough chair by a smoky fire of green wood. It was plain from his muddy boots that he had been riding about across country. He had taken off his famous greatcoat, and wore the well-known green uniform with the broad red ribbon, set off by white kerseymere breeches and a white waistcoat, a costume that set off his pale, stern Cæsar's face to advantage. His hand lay on a map unfolded over his knees. Berthier, in the brilliant costume of a Vice-Constable of the Empire, stood behind him, and Constant, his body-servant, was handing the Emperor his cup of coffee on a tray.

"What do you want?" he asked, with affected bluntness; and a glance like a shaft of light seemed to look Laurence through and through. "So you are not afraid now to speak to me before the battle? . . . What is it about?"

"Sire," she said, looking back as steadily at him, "I am Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne."

"Well?" returned the Emperor sharply, thinking that the glance meant defiance.

"Do you not understand? I am the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, and I ask for mercy," she said, kneeling as she held out the memorial drawn up by Talleyrand, with footnotes by the Empress, Cambacérès, and Malin.

The Emperor graciously raised the kneeling girl, saying with a shrewd glance:

"Will you be good now? Do you understand what the French Empire ought to be?"

"Ah! just at this moment I understand nothing but the Emperor," she said, overcome by the debonair manner in which this controller of fate spoke the words that hinted at pardon.

"Are they innocent?" asked the Emperor.

"All of them," she cried passionately.

"All? Ah! no. The gamekeeper is a dangerous character; he might kill my Senator without asking your leave——"

"Sire!" she exclaimed, "if you had a friend that had devoted himself to you, would you desert him? Would not you——"

"You are a woman," he interrupted, with a trace of banter in his voice.

"And you are a man of iron!" she cried, with an impassioned harshness that pleased him.

"The man has been condemned after a fair trial," he continued.

"But he is not guilty."

"Child! . . ." said the Emperor. He took Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne by the hand, and led her out upon the plateau. Then he spoke with that eloquence of his that could turn cowards into brave men.

"There!" he said, "there are three hundred thousand men,—they, too, are guiltless. Well, and by this time to-morrow, thirty thousand men will have died, and died for their country. Perhaps among the Prussians yonder there is some great mechanician, some man with ideas in his head, some genius, to be mown down to-morrow. And we, too, on our side, shall surely lose great men that will die unrecognized. I myself, perhaps, may see my best friend fall.—Shall I cry out against God? No. I shall be silent.—Bear this in mind, mademoiselle, that a man is as much bound to die for the laws of his country, as to die here for glory," he added, leading the way into the hut. —"Now, go back to France," he said, turning to the Marquis, "my orders will follow you thither."

Laurence believed that Michu's punishment was to be commuted, and, in a great outpouring of gratitude, she knelt and kissed the Emperor's hand.

"You are M. de Chargebœuf, are you not?" said the Emperor, confronting the Marquis.

"Yes, Sire."

"Have you a family?"

"A large family."

"Why should you not give me one of your grandsons? He should be one of my pages. . . ."

("Ah!" thought Laurence, "the sub-lieutenant peeps out; he means to be paid for his pardon.")

The Marquis bowed for all reply; but luckily General Rapp came hurrying in at that very moment.

"Sire, the horse-guards and the Grand Duke of Berg's cavalry cannot come up to-morrow before noon."

"It is of no consequence," said Napoleon, addressing Berthier; "for us, too, there are propitious moments, let us turn them to account."

At a sign of dismissal, Laurence and the Marquis withdrew to the carriage. The corporal set them on their way, and escorted them to a village where they passed the night. Next day they traveled further and further from the field of battle, to the sound of eight hundred cannon that thundered incessantly for ten hours. The tidings of the wonderful victory of Jena overtook them by the way. A week later, they reached the suburbs of Troyes. An order from the Chief Justiciary, sent through the attorney-general attached to the Court of First Instance at Troyes, directed that the four gentlemen should be set at liberty on bail, pending the decision of his Majesty, Emperor and King; but at the same time, a second order for Michu's execution was sent down by the head of the staff of counsel for the prosecution. The news had arrived that very morning. Laurence went forthwith to the prison. It was two o'clock. She had not changed her traveling dress. She gained permission to stay with Michu through the last sad ceremony called "the toilet." The Abbé Goujet, good man, had asked leave to go with Michu to the scaffold. Absolution had just been given, and Michu was lamenting that he must die without knowing what would become of his masters. So when Laurence came in, he gave a cry of joy.

"I can die now!" said he.

"They are pardoned; I do not know the conditions, but

they are pardoned," returned Laurence. "And I left nothing untried to save you, my friend, in spite of their advice. I thought I had saved you, but the Emperor deceived me with his royal graciousness."

"It was decreed above that the watch-dog should die on the same spot as his old master and mistress," said Michu.

The last hour went by very quickly. When it was time to leave the prison Michu ventured only to raise Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's hand to his lips; but she held up her face for the noble victim's solemn kiss.

Michu refused to ride in the cart.

"The innocent ought to go afoot," he said.

Nor would he allow the Abbé Goujet to lend his arm; he walked with dignity and resolution to the scaffold. As he lay on the plank he spoke to the executioner, asking the man to turn back the collar of his coat, which covered his neck.

"My clothes belong to you," he said; "try to keep it clean."

The four gentlemen had scarcely time to see Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. An orderly came from the general in command of the division, bringing sub-lieutenants' commissions for them all in the same regiment of cavalry, together with orders to repair at once to the depot at Bayonne. There were heartrending farewells, for all of them had some foreboding of the future, and Laurence went back to her desolate château.

The twin brothers fell together under the Emperor's eyes at Somosierra, the one defending the other. Their last words were—"Laurence, *Cy meurs!*"

Both had reached the rank of major. Robert d'Hauteserre fell as a colonel in the attack on the redoubt at Borodino, and his brother took his place.

After the battle of Dresden Adrien became a brigadier-general; but he was badly wounded, and came home to Cinq-Cygne to be nursed. And then it was that the Countess, a woman of two and thirty, married Adrien d'Hauteserre to save the last of the four nobles who had once been around her.

She had only a blighted heart to give, but he took it, as those who love can take, doubting nothing, when they have not lost faith altogether.

The Restoration roused no enthusiasm in Laurence. For her the Bourbons came back too late. Yet she had no reason to complain; her husband became a peer of France, with the title of Marquis de Cinq-Cygne, he received the appointment of lieutenant-general in 1816, and was rewarded by the blue ribbon for conspicuous services then rendered to the cause.

Laurence brought up Michu's son as if he had been her own child. He was called to the bar in 1827; and after two years' practice, was nominated assistant judge in the tribunal at Alençon, and subsequently became attorney for the crown at the Arcis tribunal. Laurence had invested Michu's capital. She handed over *rentes* bringing in an income of twelve thousand livres to the young man when he came of age; and afterwards arranged a marriage between him and a rich heiress—Mademoiselle Girel of Troyes.

In 1829, the Marquis de Cinq-Cygne died in Laurence's arms; his father, and mother, and children, who idolized him, were about him at the last. At the time of his death, no one had succeeded in penetrating the secret. How the Senator was kidnapped remained a mystery. Louis XVIII. by no means refused to make reparation for the injury done by the affair, but on the subject of its causes he was dumb; and thenceforth the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne was persuaded that the King was implicated in the catastrophe.

CONCLUSION

The late Marquis de Cinq-Cygne had invested his own savings and those of his father and mother in the purchase of a splendid mansion in the Rue de Faubourg du Roule. The house formed a part of a considerable estate entailed for the maintenance of the title. This explained the economy practised by the Marquis and his relatives till it became a sordid parsimony which often grieved Laurence. So after the purchase was completed, the Marquise ceased to live entirely on her estates (where she hoarded money for her children), and spent the winters in town the more willingly because her daughter Berthe and her son Paul had reached an age when their education required the resources of Paris. Madame de Cinq-Cygne went very little into society. Her husband could not fail to know that she always carried regrets in her heart; but for her he showed the most ingenious delicacy, and died, having loved but the one woman in the world. To that noble, so long slighted heart, the generous daughter of the Cinq-Cygnes returned as much love as she received during the last years of their life together; and Adrien was completely happy after all.

Laurence lives now for the joys of family life. No woman in Paris is more loved and respected by her friends. To visit at her house is an honor. Gentle, indulgent, intelligent, and what is more, simple, she charms all finer and rarer natures, and attracts them to herself, in spite of the trace of sadness in her manner. Each of her friends seems to himself to protect a woman so really strong; and perhaps in that secret attitude of protector lies the charm of her friendships. The evening of Laurence's life is fair and serene after her sad and troubled youth. People know what she has passed through.

Nobody has ever asked a question about a portrait, painted by Robert Lefebvre, on her drawing-room wall, its principal sad ornament since the keeper's death on the scaffold. Laurence's face wears the look of a hardly attained maturity, as of fruit ripened in spite of difficulties. Something like religious courage crowns the brows that have emerged from many trials.

The Marquise de Cinq-Cygne's fortune, increased by the law of indemnity, amounts to two hundred thousand livres a year, without taking her husband's income into account. She had inherited the eleven hundred thousand francs left by the Simeuses. Thenceforward she spent a hundred thousand francs per annum, and saved the rest for Berthe's dowry.

Berthe is the living portrait of her mother, with none of her daring spirit; she is her mother over again, grown dainty, sprightly, "more feminine," as Laurence says with a sigh. The Marquise would not hear of a marriage for her daughter till Berthe was twenty years old. The savings of the family had been judiciously invested by old d'Hauteserre when the funds suddenly fell in 1830, so that by the time Berthe was twenty years old, in 1833, her portion amounted to eighty thousand francs a year.

About that time the Princesse de Cadignan, wishing to marry her son, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, had gained an intimate footing for him in the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne's house. For some months past Georges de Maufrigneuse had dined three times a week at the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne. He escorted the mother and daughter to the Italiens, he caracoled about their carriage in the Bois. It was plain to the Faubourg Saint Germain that Georges was in love with Berthe, but no one could find out whether Madame de Cinq-Cygne wished her daughter to be a duchess until such time as she should be a princess, or whether it was the Princess who would fain secure so fine a fortune for her son. Was the celebrated Diane making advances to the country noblesse? Or were the provincial noblesse dismayed by Madame de Cadignan's celebrity, or frightened by her tastes and ruinous life?

The Princess had grown devout. In her anxiety to do noth-

ing to injure her son's prospects, she immured herself in private life, and spent the summer in a villa at Geneva.

One evening, the Marquise d'Espard and de Marsay, president of the council, were both at the Princesse de Cadignan's. She saw her old lover that night for the last time, for he died during the following year. Others were there besides. Rastignac, under secretary of state to de Marsay, a couple of ambassadors, one or two celebrated orators still left in the House of Peers, the old Ducs de Lenoncourt and de Navarreins, the Comte de Vandenesse and his young wife, and d'Arthez formed a strangely assorted circle, though it would be easy to account for their presence. It was a question of obtaining a pass for the Prince de Cadignan, from the Prime Minister, and de Marsay, unwilling to take the responsibility of granting the permit, had come to tell the Princess that the matter was in good hands. An old political hand was to bring a solution of the difficulty in the course of the evening.

The Marquise and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne were announced. Laurence, who never wavered in her principles, was not so much surprised as shocked to find the foremost representatives of the Legitimist cause in either house talking and laughing with the prime minister of a sovereign whom she always spoke of as "Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans." De Marsay, like a failing lamp, shone brilliantly at the last; he was glad to forget political anxieties for a little while. The Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, however, tolerated de Marsay very much as the Austrian court had just accepted M. de Saint-Aulaire—the man of the world made the minister passable; but when M. le Comte de Gondreville was announced she rose as though her chair had been heated red-hot.

"Good-bye, madame," she said stiffly, addressing the Princess; and went, taking Berthe with her, picking her way across the room so as to avoid any encounter with a man so fatal to her.

"You have perhaps broken off Georges' marriage," the Princess murmured for de Marsay's benefit.

Malin, the lawyer's clerk from Arcis, the Representative of the People, the Thermidorean, the tribune, the state councillor, count and senator under the Emperor, the peer of France by a grant of Louis XVIII., and one of the new peers of July, now made an obsequious bow to the Princesse de Cadignan.

"You need tremble no longer, fair lady, lest we wage war against princes," said he, taking a seat beside her.

Malin had enjoyed the esteem of Louis XVIII., for his long experience had been useful to that monarch. He had contributed not a little to Decaze's overthrow, and Villèle had received the full benefit of his counsels. As Charles X. gave him a cool reception, however, he had thought fit to adopt Talleyrand's grudge. He was now in high favor with the twelfth government under which he had served and would probably one day dis-serve. His friendship with one of our most famous diplomatists—a friendship of thirty-six years' standing—had come to an end during the past fifteen months. It was during the course of this evening that he made an epigram at the expense of the great politician.

"Do you know why he is hostile to the Duc de Bordeaux? . . . The claimant is too young——"

"You are giving singular counsel to young men," remarked Rastignac.

De Marsay had grown very thoughtful since the Princess spoke. He took no part in the lively conversation, but sat quietly watching Gondreville. The old man always went to bed early, and de Marsay was evidently waiting for him to go. The rest of the party followed de Marsay's example; they had seen Madame de Cinq-Cygne leave the room and knew her reasons for so doing. Gondreville had not noticed the Marquise, nor did he understand the cause of the general reserve; but business and political life had taught him tact, and he was, besides, quick-witted. Thinking that he was in the way, the old man of seventy took his leave and walked slowly to the door.

De Marsay, standing by the hearth, watched him go with an expression that suggested grave thoughts.

"I did wrong, madame, when I omitted to give you the name of any negotiator," the Prime Minister said at last when the carriage had rolled away. "But I will redeem my fault, and put it in your power to make your peace with the Cinq-Cygnes. These things happened more than thirty years ago. It is as old a story as the death of Henri Quatre; though in truth between ourselves, and in spite of the proverb, that story (like a good many more tragedies in history) is known to scarcely any one. I vow and declare, at any rate, that even if this affair did not concern the Marquise, it would be none the less interesting; for as a matter of fact it throws a light on a famous passage in our modern annals,—the passage of the Mont Saint Bernard. MM. les Ambassadeurs will see that in the matter of depth our latter-day politicians are very far removed from the Machiavellis who were raised on high above the region of storms by the popular upheaval of 1793. Some of these have latterly 'found a port,' as novelists say. You must have been tossed through the hurricanes of those times if you would be anything in France to-day."

"But is seems to me," smiled the Princess, "that in that respect your state of things at present leaves nothing to be desired——"

A little burst of polite laughter followed this speech; de Marsay could not help smiling. The ambassadors seemed to be listening eagerly. A sudden fit of coughing seized de Marsay, and the rest were silent.

"One night in June, 1800," the Prime Minister began, "just as the light of the candles grew faint in the dawn, two men in the salon of the Hôtel of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, grew tired of bouillotte (perhaps they had only been playing to amuse others), and withdrew to a boudoir. The Hôtel used to be in the Rue du Bac in those days. As for those two men (one of them is dead now, and the other has *one* foot in the grave), each was in his way as extraordinary as the other. Both had taken holy orders, and subsequently both married. One had been a simple Oratorian, the other

had worn a mitre. The name of the first was Fouché, I do not tell you who the second was; but at that time they were both simple French citizens, and neither of them particularly simple.

"The rest of the party left in the salon saw them go, and looked up somewhat curiously. A third man followed. This personage thought himself much cleverer than the first pair; his name was Sieyès; and as you all know, before the Revolution he too belonged to the Church. The lame man was at that time Minister of Foreign Relations. Fouché was Minister of General Police; Sieyès had been consul and had abdicated.

"A phlegmatic, stern little man next left his place, remarking aloud (so I was told by some one who heard him)—'I have my fears of a triplet of priests.' This was the Minister of War. Carnot's remark apparently caused no anxiety to the two consuls over their game at cards in the salon. Cambacérès and Lebrun were at the mercy of their ministers, and their ministers were infinitely cleverer men than they. The statesmen of that time are now nearly all of them dead, there is no occasion to spare them; they belong to the province of history, and the history made that night was terrible. I tell you this, because I alone know about it; for Louis XVIII. told poor Madame de Cinq-Cygne nothing, and the present Government has no interest in discovering the truth.

"The four politicians sat down. Before they had had time to say a word, the lame man shut the door. Some say he drew the bolt (there is no one like a well-bred man for thinking of these little things). The three priests' haggard, impassive faces looked as you have always seen them. Carnot's was the only high-colored countenance among them. The soldier was the first to speak.

" 'What is in question?'

" 'France,' the Prince might have said. (I admire the Prince as one of the most extraordinary men of our time.)

" 'The Republic,' Fouché certainly would have said.

" 'Power,' was probably Sieyès' reply.

De Marsay's rendering of the three speakers was so admirably perfect in tones, expressions, and gestures, that his audience exchanged glances.

"The three priests understood one another uncommonly well," he continued. "Carnot probably looked at his colleagues and the ex-consul with dignity enough; but I think he must have felt nonplussed in his own mind.

" 'Do you believe in a success?' Sieyès asked him.

" 'Anything may be expected of Bonaparte,' returned the Minister of War. 'He crossed the Alps safely.'

" 'At the present moment,' remarked the diplomatist, with measured slowness, 'he is staking his all.'

" 'In short, let us speak out,' said Fouché. 'What are we going to do, if the First Consul is beaten? Is it possible to reconstitute an army? Are we to remain his humble servants?'

" 'There is no Republic, now,' suggested Sieyès; 'he is Consul for ten years.'

" 'He has more power than Cromwell had, and he did not vote for the King's death,' added the Bishop.

" 'We have a master,' said Fouché. 'Shall we keep him in power if he loses the battle? Or shall we return to a purely Republican Government?'

" 'France can only hold out if she recovers the energy of the time of the Convention,' Carnot remarked sententiously.

" 'I am of Carnot's opinion," said Sieyès. "If Bonaparte is defeated, and comes back, there must be an end of him. He has had too much to say these seven months past.'

" 'He has the army,' Carnot said thoughfully.

" 'We shall have the people!' cried Fouché.

" 'You are prompt, sir!' remarked the *grand seigneur,* and at the sound of that deep, resonant voice the Oratorian shrank into himself.

" 'Let us speak out,' said a fifth person, a member of the old Convention, who now showed his face. 'Let us speak out. If Bonaparte wins the day, we will bow before him. If he loses, we will bury him.'

"'You were here, Malin,' said the master of the house quite imperturbably; 'you will be one of us.' And he beckoned the newcomer to a seat. It was owing to this circumstance that a sufficiently obscure member of the Convention became what he is even at this moment, as we have just seen. Malin was discreet, and the two ministers stood by him; but he was both the pivot of the machinery and the soul of their machinations.

"'The man is not by any means defeated yet!' Carnot exclaimed in a tone of conviction, 'and he has just outdone Hannibal.'

"'In case of misfortune, *here* is the Directory,' Sieyès returned, very acutely pointing out as he spoke that they were five in number.

"'And it is to the interest of each of us to maintain the French Republic,' added the Minister of Foreign Relations; 'three of us have thrown the cassock to the dogs, and the General voted for the King's death. As for you' (turning to Malin)' 'you own *émigrés'* estates.'

"'Our interests are all the same,' Sieyès affirmed peremptorily, 'and our interests are also the interests of the country.'

"'A rare coincidence,' smiled the diplomatist.

"'Action is imperative,' added Fouché. 'The battle is being fought and Melas' forces are superior. Genoa has surrendered, and Masséna has blundered into embarking for Antibes. So it is not certain that he can effect a junction, and Bonaparte in that case will be thrown on his own resources.'

"'Who told you the news?' asked Carnot.

"'It is sure news,' returned Fouché. 'You shall have the despatches in time for the Bourse.'"

De Marsay stopped for a moment. "They did not mince matters among themselves," he remarked smiling.

"'Now, when the news of the disaster comes,' Fouché went on, 'it will be no time for organizing the clubs, appealing to patriotism, and making changes in the Constitution. Our 18th of Brumaire ought to be ready by then.'

" 'Let us leave the Minister of Police to do it,' suggested the diplomatist, 'and we must beware of Lucien.' (Lucien Bonaparte was at that time Minister of the Interior.)

" 'I can hold him in,' said Fouché.

" 'Gentlemen!' exclaimed Sieyès, 'our Directory shall not be at the mercy of anarchy and change. We will organize an oligarchy, a senate composed of life members, an elective assembly in our control. For we must profit by the mistakes of the past.'

" 'With that system I shall have a quiet life,' said the Bishop.

" 'Find a man that we can trust with the correspondence with Moreau; for the Army of Germany will be our one resource!' cried Carnot, deep in thought."

De Marsay paused. "In truth, these men were right, gentlemen!" he said. "They behaved like great men in the crisis; and I should have done as they did.

" 'Gentlemen!' . . . exclaimed Sieyès in stern, solemn tones.

"Every one present understood perfectly well what was meant by that word 'gentlemen.' The same promise, the same loyalty, could be read in all their faces; a promise of absolute silence and complete solidarity in case Bonaparte should return in triumph.

" 'We all of us know what we have to do,' added Fouché.

"Sieyès meanwhile had slipped the bolt noiselessly back. His priest's ear had served him well. Lucien came in.

" 'Good news, gentlemen! A courier has brought Madame Bonaparte a few words from the First Consul. He has made a beginning with a victory at Montebello.'

"The three ministers looked in each other's faces.

" 'Was it a general engagement?' asked Carnot.

" 'No, a battle. Lannes covered himself with glory. It was a bloody encounter. Lannes with ten thousand men was attacked by eighteen thousand, and saved by a division that came up to his support. Ott is in full flight. In fact, Melas' line of operations has been cut.'

"'When did this take place?' asked Carnot.

"'On the 8th,' Lucien replied.

"'And this is the 13th,' returned the sagacious Minister. 'Well, to all appearance the fate of France is staked on the fortune of war at this moment.' (And as a matter of fact the battle of Marengo began at daybreak on the 14th of June.)

"'Four days of mortal suspense!' said Lucien.

"'Mortal?' the Minister of Foreign Relations repeated coolly with a questioning look.

"'Four days,' said Fouché.

"An eye-witness assured me that the two consuls only heard the news when the six men returned to the salon. It was then four o'clock in the morning.

"Fouché was the first to go. His was a profound and extraordinary genius, working in the shadow, and little known; yet he was an equal surely of a Philip II., a Tiberius, or a Borgia. He behaved after the Walcheren affair like a consummate tactician, a great statesman, and a far-sighted administrator. He was the one minister that Napoleon had; and you know that he alarmed Napoleon at the time of which I speak. Fouché, Masséna, and the Prince are the three greatest men, the three wisest heads, that I know in diplomacy, war, and government. If Napoleon had frankly associated them with his work there would be no Europe now but a vast French empire instead. Fouché only became estranged from Napoleon when he saw Sieyès and the Prince de Talleyrand set aside.

"This was what he did, working beneath the surface with infernal activity. In the space of three days, without showing his hand, he stirred up the ashes and organized that general agitation which hung over the whole of France and revived the Republican energy of 1793.

"As some light must be thrown on this dark corner of our story, I must tell you that all the Republican plots against the life of the victor of Marengo may be traced to this agitation. It was the work of a man who held all the threads

of the dispersed party of the Mountain. The consciousness of the harm that he had done gave Fouché firmness sufficient to point out to Bonaparte that, contrary to the opinion of the latter, there were more Republicans than Royalists mixed up in these plots.

"Fouché understood men to admiration. He counted upon Sieyès because Sieyès' ambition had been disappointed; upon Talleyrand because the prince was a *grand seigneur;* upon Carnot, because he knew Carnot's profound honesty; but he had his fears of our man of to-night, and this was how he set about committing him. Malin was only Malin in those days, and Malin was in correspondence with Louis XVIII. The Minister of Police accordingly set Malin to draft the proclamations of the Revolutionary government, with its enactments and decrees. Factious persons who took part in the 18th of Brumaire were declared outlaws. And more, far more than this, the unwilling accomplice was obliged to have the necessary quantity of placards printed, and to store them in packages in his own house. The printer was arrested as a conspirator (for a Revolutionary printer had been purposely chosen), and the police kept him for a couple of months before they set him at liberty. The man died in 1816 in the firm belief that there had been a conspiracy set afoot by the Mountain.

"One of the most curious pieces of acting on the part of Fouché's police was, beyond question, the scene after the arrival of the first courier with the news of the loss of the battle of Marengo. The first banker of the day had an agent at the seat of war. The battle went against Napoleon, as you may remember, until about seven o'clock in the evening. At noon the banker's agent considered that the French army was hopelessly lost, and hastened to despatch a courier. The Minister of Police had sent for bill-posters and criers; and a trusty adherent had arrived with a wagon-load of the printed bills, when the courier, sent off in the evening, using his utmost diligence, arrived with the news of a victory that sent France fairly frantic with joy.

"Heavy sums were lost on the Bourse. But the army of bill-posters and criers were bidden to wait till the placards extolling the victory and the First Consul could be printed, and they published these instead of the proclamation of outlawry and the political death of Bonaparte.

"Malin knew that the whole responsibility of the plot was sure to fall on his shoulders. He was so frightened that he carted the packages of printed matter down to Gondreville by night, and no doubt he buried the unlucky papers in the cellars of the château that he had bought here under the name of another man,—he nominated him as president of a Court Imperial,—a man called—Marion; that was his name. Then Malin went back to Paris in time enough to congratulate the First Consul.

"Napoleon came hurrying back from Italy after the battle of Marengo, as you know, with startling haste; and for those who know the secret history of the time, it is certain that a message from Lucien was the cause of his prompt return. Lucien had an inkling of the attitude of the Mountain party; he had no idea of the quarter from which the wind blew, but he was afraid of a storm. He was incapable of suspecting the three ministers; the cause of the movement, he thought, was the hostile feeling aroused by his brother on the 18th of Brumaire, together with the firm belief that the check in Italy was irreparable, a belief largely shared at the time by the rest of the men of 1793. The cry, 'Down with the tyrant!' shouted at St. Cloud was always ringing in Lucien's ears.

"The battle of Marengo detained Napoleon in the Lombard plain till the 25th of June. On the 2d of July he arrived in France. Just try to picture the faces of the five conspirators as they congratulated the First Consul at the Tuileries on his victory! In that very room Fouché told the tribune (for Malin had a turn as a tribune) to wait a while yet, and that all was not over. As a matter of fact, it seemed to Fouché and to M. de Talleyrand that the First Consul was not quite so much wedded to the Revolution as

they themselves were; and so, for their greater safety, they buckled him thereunto by the affair of the Duc d'Enghien. You can trace the execution of that prince, by visible ramifications, back to the plot woven that night in the Hôtel of the Minister of Foreign Relations, at the time of the Marengo campaign. Certainly, at this day, it is plain to any one who has known well-informed persons, that Bonaparte was duped like a child by M. de Talleyrand and Fouché. Ambassadors from the House of Bourbon were making overtures to the First Consul at that time. Talleyrand and Fouché wanted to make a final breach between them."

"Talleyrand was playing a game of whist at Madame de Luynes'," began one of de Marsay's audience. "At three o'clock in the morning he drew out his watch and interrupted the game to ask his three companions, quite suddenly and without any preface, 'whether the Prince de Condé had any child beside the Duc d'Enghien.' So absurd a question in M. de Talleyrand's mouth caused the greatest astonishment.—'Why do you ask, when you know so well that he has none?' said they.—'To inform you that the House of Condé has come to an end at this moment.'—M. de Talleyrand had been at the Hôtel de Luynes since the evening began; he knew, no doubt, that it was impossible that Bonaparte should grant a pardon."

"But all this has nothing to do with Madame de Cinq-Cygne, that I can see," said Rastignac to de Marsay.

"Ah! you were so young, my dear fellow, that I forgot the conclusion. You know that the Comte de Gondreville was kidnapped. The affair cost the lives of the two Simeuses, and of d'Hauteserre's elder brother; d'Hauteserre married Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, and became first the Comte and afterwards the Marquis de Cinq-Cygne——"

Several persons, however, had not heard the story; and at their request, de Marsay gave the history of the trial, saying that the five mysterious persons were tools sent down by the general police to destroy the very packages of printed matter which the Comte de Gondreville had himself come down

to burn, when he believed that the Empire was an assured fact.

"I suspect," said de Marsay, "that Fouché made search at the same time for proofs of the correspondence between Gondreville and Louis XVIII. There had been an understanding between them all along,—even during the Terror. But in this deplorable business there was an animus on the part of the principal agent. He is living yet. He is one of the great men that can fill subordinate positions; he has distinguished himself by astonishing feats. They will not find his like again. It seems that Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne treated him uncivilly when he went down to arrest the Simeuses. So, madame, you have the secret of the affair. You can explain it to the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, and assist her to understand why Louis XVIII. kept silence about it."

PARIS, *January* 1841.

THE MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT

To Monsieur le Comte Ferdinand de Gramont.

My dear Ferdinand,—If the chances of the world of literature—*habent sua fata libelli*—should allow these lines to be an enduring record, that will still be but a trifle in return for the trouble you have taken—you, the Hozier, the Cherin, the King-at-Arms of these Studies of Life; you, to whom the Navarreins, Cadignans, Langeais, Blamont-Chauvrys, Chaulieus, Arthez, Esgrignons, Mortsaufs, Valois—the hundred great names that form the Aristocracy of the "Human Comedy" owe their lordly mottoes and ingenious armorial bearings. Indeed, "the Armorial of the Études, devised by Ferdinand de Gramont, gentleman," is a complete manual of French Heraldry, in which nothing is forgotten, not even the arms of the Empire, and I shall preserve it as a monument of friendship and of Benedictine patience. What profound knowledge of the old feudal spirit is to be seen in the motto of the Beauséants, *Pulchrè sedens, melius agens;* in that of the Espards, *Des partem leonis;* in that of the Vandenesses, *Ne se vend.* And what elegance in the thousand details of the learned symbolism which will always show how far accuracy has been carried in my work, to which you, the poet, have contributed.

Your old friend,

De Balzac.

On the skirts of Le Berry stands a town which, watered by the Loire, infallibly attracts the traveler's eye. Sancerre crowns the topmost height of a chain of hills, the last of the range that gives variety to the Nivernais. The Loire floods the flats at the foot of these slopes, leaving a yellow alluvium that is extremely fertile, excepting in those places where it

has deluged them with sand and destroyed them forever, by one of those terrible risings which are also incidental to the Vistula—the Loire of the northern coast.

The hill on which the houses of Sancerre are grouped is so far from the river that the little river-port of Saint-Thibault thrives on the life of Sancerre. There wine is shipped and oak staves are landed, with all the produce brought from the upper and lower Loire. At the period when this story begins the suspension bridges at Cosne and at Saint-Thibault were already built. Travelers from Paris to Sancerre by the southern road were no longer ferried across the river from Cosne to Saint-Thibault; and this of itself is enough to show that the great cross-shuffle of 1830 was a thing of the past, for the House of Orleans has always had a care for substantial improvements, though somewhat after the fashion of a husband who makes his wife presents out of her marriage portion.

Excepting that part of Sancerre which occupies the little plateau, the streets are more or less steep, and the town is surrounded by slopes known as the Great Ramparts, a name which shows that they are the highroads of the place.

Outside the ramparts lies a belt of vineyards. Wine forms the chief industry and the most important trade of the country, which yields several vintages of high-class wine full of aroma, and so nearly resembling the wines of Burgundy, that the vulgar palate is deceived. So Sancerre finds in the wine-shops of Paris the quick market indispensable for liquor that will not keep for more than seven or eight years. Below the town lie a few villages, Fontenoy and Saint-Satur, almost suburbs, reminding us by their situation of the smiling vineyards about Neuchâtel in Switzerland.

The town still bears much of its ancient aspect; the streets are narrow and paved with pebbles carted up from the Loire. Some old houses are to be seen there. The citadel, a relic of military power and feudal times, stood one of the most terrible sieges of our religious wars, when French Calvinists far outdid the ferocious Cameronians of Walter Scott's tales.

The town of Sancerre, rich in its greater past, but widowed now of its military importance, is doomed to an even less glorious future, for the course of trade lies on the right bank of the Loire. The sketch here given shows that Sancerre will be left more and more lonely in spite of the two bridges connecting it with Cosne.

Sancerre, the pride of the left bank, numbers three thousand five hundred inhabitants at most, while at Cosne there are now more than six thousand. Within half a century the part played by these two towns standing opposite each other has been reversed. The advantage of situation, however, remains with the historic town, whence the view on every side is perfectly enchanting, where the air is deliciously pure, the vegetation splendid, and the residents, in harmony with nature, are friendly souls, good fellows, and devoid of Puritanism, though two-thirds of the population are Calvinists. Under such conditions, though there are the usual disadvantages of life in a small town, and each one lives under the officious eye which makes private life almost a public concern, on the other hand, the spirit of township—a sort of patriotism, which cannot indeed take the place of a love of home—flourishes triumphantly.

Thus the town of Sancerre is exceedingly proud of having given birth to one of the glories of modern medicine, Horace Bianchon, and to an author of secondary rank, Étienne Lousteau, one of our most successful journalists. The district included under the municipality of Sancerre, distressed at finding itself practically ruled by seven or eight large landowners, the wire-pullers of the elections, tried to shake off the electoral yoke of a creed which had reduced it to a rotten borough. This little conspiracy, plotted by a handful of men whose vanity was provoked, failed through the jealousy which the elevation of one of them, as the inevitable result, roused in the breasts of the others. This result showed the radical defect of the scheme, and the remedy then suggested was to rally round a champion at the next election, in the person of

one of the two men who so gloriously represented Sancerre in Paris circles.

This idea was extraordinarily advanced for the provinces, for since 1830 the nomination of parochial dignitaries has increased so greatly that real statesmen are becoming rare indeed in the lower chamber.

In point of fact, this plan, of very doubtful outcome, was hatched in the brain of the Superior Woman of the borough, *dux femina fasti,* but with a view to personal interest. This idea was so widely rooted in this lady's past life, and so entirely comprehended her future prospects, that it can scarcely be understood without some sketch of her antecedent career.

Sancerre at that time could boast of a Superior Woman, long misprized indeed, but now, about 1836, enjoying a pretty extensive local reputation. This, too, was the period at which the two Sancerrois in Paris were attaining, each in his own line, to the highest degree of glory for one, and of fashion for the other. Étienne Lousteau, a writer in reviews, signed his name to contributions to a paper that had eight thousand subscribers; and Bianchon, already chief physician to a hospital, Officer of the Legion of Honor, and member of the Academy of Sciences, had just been made a professor.

If it were not that the word would to many readers seem to imply a degree of blame, it might be said that George Sand created *Sandism,* so true is it that, morally speaking, all good has a reverse of evil. This leprosy of sentimentality has spoilt many women, who, but for her pretensions to genius, would have been charming. Still, *Sandism* has its good side, in that the woman attacked by it bases her assumption of superiority on feelings scorned; she is a blue-stocking of sentiment; and she is rather less of a bore, love to some extent neutralizing literature. The most conspicuous result of George Sand's celebrity was to elicit the fact that France has a perfectly enormous number of superior women, who have, however, till now been so generous as to leave the field to the Maréchal de Saxe's granddaughter.

The Superior Woman of Sancerre lived at La Baudraye, a town-house and country-house in one, within ten minutes of the town, and in the village, or, if you will, the suburb of Saint-Satur. The La Baudrayes of the present day have, as is frequently the case, thrust themselves in, and are but a substitute for those La Baudrayes whose name, glorious in the Crusades, figured in the chief events of the history of Le Berry.

The story must be told.

In the time of Louis XIV. a certain sheriff named Milaud, whose forefathers had been furious Calvinists, was converted at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. To encourage this movement in one of the strongholds of Calvinism, the King gave the said Milaud a good appointment in the "Waters and Forests," granted him arms and the title of Sire (or Lord) de la Baudraye, with the fief of the old and genuine La Baudrayes. The descendants of the famous Captain la Baudraye fell, sad to say, into one of the snares laid for heretics by the new decrees, and were hanged—an unworthy deed of the great King's.

Under Louis XV. Milaud de la Baudraye, from being a mere squire, was made Chevalier, and had influence enough to obtain for his son a cornet's commission in the Musketeers. This officer perished at Fontenoy, leaving a child, to whom King Louis XVI. subsequently granted the privileges, by patent, of a farmer-general, in remembrance of his father's death on the field of battle.

This financier, a fashionable wit, great at charades, capping verses, and posies to Chlora, lived in society, was a hanger-on to the Duc de Nivernais, and fancied himself obliged to follow the nobility into exile; but he took care to carry his money with him. Thus the rich *émigré* was able to assist more than one family of high rank.

In 1800, tired of hoping, and perhaps tired of lending, he returned to Sancerre, bought back La Baudraye out of a feeling of vanity and imaginary pride, quite intelligible in a sheriff's grandson, though under the consulate his prospects

were but slender; all the more so, indeed, because the ex-farmer-general had small hopes of his heir's perpetuating the new race of La Baudraye.

Jean Athanase Polydore Milaud de la Baudraye, his only son, more than delicate from his birth, was very evidently the child of a man whose constitution had early been exhausted by the excesses in which rich men indulge, who then marry at the first stage of premature old age, and thus bring degeneracy into the highest circles of society. During the years of the emigration Madame de la Baudraye, a girl of no fortune, chosen for her noble birth, had patiently reared this sallow, sickly boy, for whom she had the devoted love mothers feel for such changeling creatures. Her death—she was a Casteran de la Tour—contributed to bring about Monsieur de la Baudraye's return to France.

This Lucullus of the Milauds, when he died, left his son the fief, stripped indeed of its fines and dues, but graced with weathercocks bearing his coat-of-arms, a thousand louis-d'or—in 1802 a considerable sum of money—and certain receipts for claims on very distinguished *émigrés* enclosed in a pocket-book full of verses, with this inscription on the wrapper, *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.*

Young La Baudraye did not die, but he owed his life to habits of monastic strictness; to the economy of action which Fontenelle preached as the religion of the invalid; and, above all, to the air of Sancerre and the influence of its fine elevation, whence a panorama over the valley of the Loire may be seen extending for forty leagues.

From 1802 to 1815 young La Baudraye added several plots to his vineyards, and devoted himself to the culture of the vine. The Restoration seemed to him at first so insecure that he dared not go to Paris to claim his debts; but after Napoleon's death he tried to turn his father's collection of autographs into money, though not understanding the deep philosophy which had thus mixed up I O U's and copies of verses. But the winegrower lost so much time in impressing his identity on the Duke of Navarreins "and others," as he

phrased it, that he came back to Sancerre, to his beloved vintage, without having obtained anything but offers of service.

The Restoration had raised the nobility to such a degree of lustre as made La Baudraye wish to justify his ambitions by having an heir. This happy result of matrimony he considered doubtful, or he would not so long have postponed the step; however, finding himself still above ground in 1823, at the age of forty-three, a length of years which no doctor, astrologer, or midwife would have dared to promise him, he hoped to earn the reward of his sober life. And yet his choice showed such a lack of prudence in regard to his frail constitution, that the malicious wit of a country town could not help thinking it must be the result of some deep calculation.

Just at this time His Eminence, Monseigneur the Archbishop of Bourges, had converted to the Catholic faith a young person, the daughter of one of the citizen families, who were the first upholders of Calvinism, and who, thanks to their obscurity or to some compromise with Heaven, had escaped from the persecutions under Louis XIV. The Piédefers—a name that was obviously one of the quaint nicknames assumed by the champions of the Reformation—had set up as highly respectable cloth merchants. But in the reign of Louis XVI., Abraham Piédefer fell into difficulties, and at his death in 1786 left his two children in extreme poverty. One of them, Tobie Piédefer, went out to the Indies, leaving the pittance they had inherited to his elder brother. During the Revolution Moïse Piédefer bought up the nationalized land, pulled down abbeys and churches with all the zeal of his ancestors, oddly enough, and married a Catholic, the only daughter of a member of the Convention who had perished on the scaffold. This ambitious Piédefer died in 1819, leaving his wife a fortune impaired by agricultural speculation, and a little girl of remarkable beauty. This child, brought up in the Calvinist faith, was named Dinah, in accordance with the custom in use among the sect, of taking their Christian names from the Bible, so as to have nothing in common with the Saints of the Roman Church.

Mademoiselle Dinah Piédefer was placed by her mother in one of the best schools in Bourges, that kept by the Demoiselles Chamarolles, and was soon as highly distinguished for the qualities of her mind as for her beauty; but she found herself snubbed by girls of birth and fortune, destined by-and-by to play a greater part in the world than a mere plebeian, the daughter of a mother who was dependent on the settlement of Piédefer's estate. Dinah, having raised herself for the moment above her companions, now aimed at remaining on a level with them for the rest of her life. She determined, therefore, to renounce Calvinism, in the hope that the Cardinal would extend his favor to his proselyte and interest himself in her prospects. You may from this judge of Mademoiselle Dinah's superiority, since at the age of seventeen she was a convert solely from ambition.

The Archbishop, possessed with the idea that Dinah Piédefer would adorn society, was anxious to see her married. But every family to whom the prelate made advances took fright at a damsel gifted with the looks of a princess, who was reputed the cleverest of Mademoiselle Chamarolles' pupils, and who, at the somewhat theatrical ceremonial of prize-giving, always took a leading part. A thousand crowns a year, which was as much as she could hope for from the estate of La Hautoy when divided between the mother and daughter, would be a mere trifle in comparison with the expenses into which a husband would be led by the personal advantages of so brilliant a creature.

As soon as all these facts came to the ears of little Polydore de la Baudraye—for they were the talk of every circle in the Department of the Cher—he went to Bourges just when Madame Piédefer, a devotee at high services, had almost made up her own mind and her daughter's to take the first comer with well-lined pockets—the first *chien coiffé,* as they say in Le Berry. And if the Cardinal was delighted to receive Monsieur de la Baudraye, Monsieur de la Baudraye was even better pleased to receive a wife from the hands of the Cardinal. The little gentleman only demanded of His Eminence

a formal promise to support his claims with the President of the Council to enable him to recover his debts from the Duc de Navarreins "and others" by a lien on their indemnities. This method, however, seemed to the able Minister then occupying the Pavillon Marsan rather too sharp practice, and he gave the vine-owner to understand that his business should be attended to all in good time.

It is easy to imagine the excitement produced in the Sancerre district by the news of Monsieur de la Baudraye's imprudent marriage.

"It is quite intelligible," said Président Boirouge; "the little man was very much startled, as I am told, at hearing that handsome young Milaud, the Attorney-General's deputy at Nevers, say to Monsieur de Clagny as they were looking at the turrets of La Baudraye, 'That will be mine some day.' —'But,' says Clagny, 'he may marry and have children.'—'Impossible!'—So you may imagine how such a changeling as little La Baudraye must hate that colossal Milaud."

There was at Nevers a plebeian branch of the Milauds, which had grown so rich in the cutlery trade that the present representative of that branch had been brought up to the civil service, in which he had enjoyed the patronage of Marchangy, now dead.

It will be as well to eliminate from this story, in which moral developments play the principal part, the baser material interests which alone occupied Monsieur de la Baudraye, by briefly relating the results of his negotiations in Paris. This will also throw light on certain mysterious phenomena of contemporary history, and the underground difficulties in matters of politics which hampered the Ministry at the time of the Restoration.

The promises of Ministers were so illusory that Monsieur de la Baudraye determined on going to Paris at the time when the Cardinal's presence was required there by the sitting of the Chambers.

This is how the Duc de Navarreins, the principal debtor

threatened by Monsieur de la Baudraye, got out of the scrape.

The country gentleman, lodging at the Hôtel de Mayence, Rue Saint-Honoré, near the Place Vendôme, one morning received a visit from a confidential agent of the Ministry, who was an expert in "winding up" business. This elegant personage, who stepped out of an elegant cab, and was dressed in the most elegant style, was requested to walk up to No. 37—that is to say, to the third floor, to a small room where he found his provincial concocting a cup of coffee over his bedroom fire.

"Is it to Monsieur Milaud de la Baudraye that I have the honor——"

"Yes," said the little man, draping himself in his dressing-gown.

After examining this garment, the illicit offspring of an old chiné wrapper of Madame Piédefer's and a gown of the late lamented Madame de la Baudraye, the emissary considered the man, the dressing-gown, and the little stove on which the milk was boiling in a tin saucepan, as so homogeneous and characteristic, that he deemed it needless to beat about the bush.

"I will lay a wager, monsieur," said he, audaciously, "that you dine for forty sous at Hurbain's in the Palais Royal."

"Pray, why?"

"Oh, I know you, having seen you there," replied the Parisian with perfect gravity. "All the princes' creditors dine there. You know that you recover scarcely ten per cent on debts from these fine gentlemen. I would not give you five per cent on a debt to be recovered from the estate of the late Duc d'Orléans—nor even," he added in a low voice—"from MONSIEUR."

"So you have come to buy up the bills?" said La Baudraye, thinking himself very clever.

"Buy them!" said his visitor. "Why, what do you take me for? I am Monsieur des Lupeaulx, Master of Appeals,

Secretary-General to the Ministry, and I have come to propose an arrangement."

"What is that?"

"Of course, monsieur, you know the position of your debtor——"

"Of my debtors——"

"Well, monsieur, you understand the position of your debtors; they stand high in the King's good graces, but they have no money, and are obliged to make a good show.—Again, you know the difficulties of the political situation. The aristocracy has to be rehabilitated in the face of a very strong force of the third estate. The King's idea—and France does him scant justice—is to create a peerage as a national institution analogous to the English peerage. To realize this grand idea, we need years—and millons.—*Noblesse oblige.* The Duc de Navarreins, who is, as you know, first gentleman of the Bedchamber to the King, does not repudiate his debt; but he cannot—Now, be reasonable.—Consider the state of politics. We are emerging from the pit of Revolution.—And you yourself are noble—He simply cannot pay——"

"Monsieur——"

"You are hasty," said des Lupeaulx. "Listen. He cannot pay in money. Well, then; you, a clever man, can take payment in favors—Royal or Ministerial."

"What! When in 1793 my father put down one hundred thousand——"

"My dear sir, recrimination is useless. Listen to a simple statement in political arithmetic: The collectorship at Sancerre is vacant; a certan paymaster-general of the forces has a claim on it, but he has no chance of getting it; you have the chance—and no claim. You will get the place. You will hold it for three months, you will then resign, and Monsieur Gravier will give twenty thousand francs for it. In addition, the Order of the Legion of Honor will be conferred on you."

"Well, that is something," said the wine-grower, tempted by the money rather than by the red ribbon.

"But then," said des Lupeaulx, "you must show your gratitude to His Excellency by restoring to Monseigneur the Duc de Navarreins all your claims on him."

La Baudraye returned to Sancerre as Collector of Taxes. Six months later he was superseded by Monsieur Gravier, regarded as one of the most agreeable financiers who had served under the Empire, and who was of course presented by Monsieur de la Baudraye to his wife.

As soon as he was released from his functions, Monsieur de la Baudraye returned to Paris to come to an understanding with some other debtors. This time he was made a Referendary under the Great Seal, Baron, and Officer of the Legion of Honor. He sold the appointment as Referendary; and then the Baron de la Baudraye called on his last remaining debtors, and reappeared at Sancerre as Master of Appeals, with an appointment as Royal Commissioner to a commercial association established in the Nivernais, at a salary of six thousand francs, an absolute sinecure. So the worthy La Baudraye, who was supposed to have committed a financial blunder, had, in fact, done very good business in the choice of a wife.

Thanks to sordid economy and an indemnity paid him for the estate belonging to his father, nationalized and sold in 1793, by the year 1827 the little man could realize the dream of his whole life. By paying four hundred thousand francs down, and binding himself to further instalments, which compelled him to live for six years on the air as it came, to use his own expression, he was able to purchase the estate of Anzy on the banks of the Loire, about two leagues above Sancerre, and its magnificent castle built by Philibert de l'Orme, the admiration of every connoisseur, and for five centuries the property of the Uxelles family. At last he was one of the great landowners of the province! It is not absolutely certain that the satisfaction of knowing that an entail had been created, by letters patent dated back to December 1820, including the estates of Anzy, of La Baudraye, and of La Hautoy, was any compensation to Dinah on finding herself reduced to unconfessed penuriousness till 1835.

This sketch of the financial policy of the first Baron de la Baudraye explains the man completely. Those who are familiar with the manias of country folks will recognize in him the *land-hunger* which becomes such a consuming passion to the exclusion of every other; a sort of avarice displayed in the sight of the sun, which often leads to ruin by a want of balance between the interest on mortgages and the products of the soil. Those who, from 1802 till 1827, had merely laughed at the little man as they saw him trotting to Saint-Thibault and attending to his business, like a merchant living on his vineyards, found the answer to the riddle when the ant-lion seized his prey, after waiting for the day when the extravagance of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse culminated in the sale of that splendid property.

Madame Piédefer came to live with her daughter. The combined fortunes of Monsieur de la Baudraye and his mother-in-law, who had been content to accept an annuity of twelve hundred francs on the lands of La Hautoy which she handed over to him, amounted to an acknowledged income of about fifteen thousand francs.

During the early days of her married life, Dinah had effected some alterations which had made the house at La Baudraye a very pleasant residence. She turned a spacious forecourt into a formal garden, pulling down wine-stores, presses, and shabby outhouses. Behind the manor-house, which, though small, did not lack style with its turrets and gables, she laid out a second garden with shrubs, flower-beds, and lawns, and divided it from the vineyards by a wall hidden under creepers. She also made everything within doors as comfortable as their narrow circumstances allowed.

In order not to be ruined by a young lady so very superior as Dinah seemed to be, Monsieur de la Baudraye was shrewd enough to say nothing as to the recovery of debts in Paris. This dead secrecy as to his money matters gave a touch of mystery to his character, and lent him dignity in his wife's eyes during the first years of their married life—so majestic is silence!

The alterations effected at La Baudraye made everybody eager to see the young mistress, all the more so because Dinah would never show herself, nor receive any company, before she felt quite settled in her home and had thoroughly studied the inhabitants, and, above all, her taciturn husband. When, one spring morning in 1825, pretty Madame de la Baudraye was first seen walking on the Mall in a blue velvet dress, with her mother in black velvet, there was quite an excitement in Sancerre. This dress confirmed the young woman's reputation for superiority, brought up, as she had been, in the capital of Le Berry. Every one was afraid lest in entertaining this phœnix of the Department, the conversation should not be clever enough; and, of course, everybody was constrained in the presence of Madame de la Baudraye, who produced a sort of terror among the women-folk. As they admired a carpet of Indian shawl-pattern in the La Baudraye drawing-room, a Pompadour writing-table carved and gilt, brocade window curtains, and a Japanese bowl full of flowers on the round table among a selection of the newest books; when they heard the fair Dinah playing at sight, without making the smallest demur before seating herself at the piano, the idea they conceived of her superiority assumed vast proportions. That she might never allow herself to become careless or the victim of bad taste, Dinah had determined to keep herself up to the mark as to the fashions and latest developments of luxury by an active correspondence with Anna Grossetête, her bosom friend at Mademoiselle Chamarolles' school.

Anna, thanks to a fine fortune, had married the Comte de Fontaine's third son. Thus those ladies who visited at La Baudraye were perpetually piqued by Dinah's success in leading the fashion; do what they would, they were always behind, or, as they say on the turf, distanced.

While all these trifles gave rise to malignant envy in the ladies of Sancerre, Dinah's conversation and wit engendered absolute aversion. In her ambition to keep her mind on the level of Parisian brilliancy, Madame de la Baudraye allowed no vacuous small talk in her presence, no old-fashioned com-

pliments, no pointless remarks; she would never endure the yelping of tittle-tattle, the backstairs slander which forms the staple of talk in the country. She liked to hear of discoveries in science or art, or the latest pieces at the theatres, the newest poems, and by airing the cant words of the day she made a show of uttering thoughts.

The Abbé Duret, Curé of Sancerre, an old man of a lost type of clergy in France, a man of the world with a liking for cards, had not dared to indulge this taste in so liberal a district as Sancerre; he, therefore, was delighted at Madame de a Baudraye's coming, and they got on together to admiration. The *sous-préfet,* one Vicomte de Chargebœuf, was delighted to find in Madame de la Baudraye's drawing-room a sort of oasis where there was a truce to provincial life. As to Monsieur de Clagny, the Public Prosecutor, his admiration for the fair Dinah kept him bound to Sancerre. The enthusiastic lawyer refused all promotion, and became a quite pious adorer of this angel of grace and beauty. He was a tall, lean man, with a minatory countenance set off by terrible eyes in deep black circles, under enormous eyebrows; and his eloquence, very unlike his love-making, could be incisive.

Monsieur Gravier was a little, round man, who, in the days of the Empire had been a charming ballad-singer; it was this accomplishment that had won him the high position of Paymaster-General of the forces. Having mixed himself up in certain important matters in Spain with generals at that time in opposition, he had made the most of these connections to the Minister, who, in consideration of the place he had lost, promised him the Receivership at Sancerre, and then allowed him to pay for the appointment. The frivolous spirit and light tone of the Empire had become ponderous in Monsieur Gravier; he did not, or would not, understand the wide difference between manners under the Restoration and under the Empire. Still, he conceived of himself as far superior to Monsieur de Clagny; his style was in better taste; he followed the fashion, was to be seen in a buff waistcoat, gray trousers, and neat, tightly-fitting coats; he wore a fashionable silk tie

slipped through a diamond ring, while the lawyer never dressed in anything but black—coat, trousers, and waistcoat alike, and those often shabby.

These four men were the first to go into ecstasies over Dinah's cultivation, good taste, and refinement, and pronounced her a woman of most superior mind. Then the women said to each other, "Madame de la Baudraye must laugh at us behind our back."

This view, which was more or less correct, kept them from visiting at La Baudraye. Dinah, attainted and convicted of pedantry, because she spoke grammatically, was nicknamed the Sappho of Saint-Satur. At last everybody made insolent game of the great qualities of the woman who had thus roused the enmity of the ladies of Sancerre. And they ended by denying a superiority—after all, merely comparative!—which emphasized their ignorance, and did not forgive it. Where the whole population is hunch-backed, a straight shape is the monstrosity; Dinah was regarded as monstrous and dangerous, and she found herself in a desert.

Astonished at seeing the women of the neighborhood only at long intervals, and for visits of a few minutes, Dinah asked Monsieur de Clagny the reason of this state of things.

"You are too superior a woman to be liked by other women," said the lawyer.

Monsieur Gravier, when questioned by the forlorn fair, only, after much entreaty, replied:

"Well, lady fair, you are not satisfied to be merely charming. You are clever and well educated, you know every book that comes out, you love poetry, you are a musician, and you talk delightfully. Women cannot forgive so much superiority."

Men said to Monsieur de la Baudraye:

"You who have such a Superior Woman for a wife are very fortunate——" And at last he himself would say:

"I who have a Superior Woman for a wife, am very fortunate," etc.

Madame Piédefer, flattered through her daughter, also al-

lowed herself to say such things—"My daughter, who is a very Superior Woman, was writing yesterday to Madame de Fontaine such and such a thing."

Those who know the world—France, Paris—know how true it is that many celebrities are thus created.

Two years later, by the end of the year 1825, Dinah de la Baudraye was accused of not choosing to have any visitors but men; then it was said that she did not care for women—and that was a crime. Not a thing she could do, not her most trifling action, could escape criticism and misrepresentation. After making every sacrifice that a well-bred woman can make, and placing herself entirely in the right, Madame de la Baudraye was so rash as to say to a false friend who condoled with her on her isolation:

"I would rather have my bowl empty than with anything in it!"

This speech produced a terrible effect on Sancerre, and was cruelly retorted on the Sappho of Saint-Satur when, seeing her childless after five years of married life, *little* de la Baudraye became a byword for laughter. To understand this provincial witticism, readers may be reminded of the Bailli de Ferrette—some, no doubt, having known him—of whom it was said that he was the bravest man in Europe for daring to walk on his legs, and who was accused of putting lead in his shoes to save himself from being blown away. Monsieur de la Baudraye, a sallow and almost diaphanous creature, would have been engaged by the Bailli de Ferrette as first gentleman-in-waiting if that diplomatist had been the Grand Duke of Baden instead of being merely his envoy.

Monsieur de la Baudraye, whose legs were so thin that, for mere decency, he wore false calves, whose thighs were like the arms of an average man, whose body was not unlike that of a cockchafer, would have been an advantageous foil to the Bailli de Ferrette. As he walked, the little vine-owner's leg-pads often twisted round on to his shins, so little did he make a secret of them, and he would thank any one who warned him

of this little mishap. He wore knee-breeches, black silk stockings, and a white waistcoat till 1824. After his marriage he adopted blue trousers and boots with heels, which made Sancerre declare that he had added two inches to his stature that he might come up to his wife's chin. For ten years he was always seen in the same little bottle-green coat with large white-metal buttons, and a black stock that accentuated his cold stingy face, lighted up by gray-blue eyes as keen and passionless as a cat's. Being very gentle, as men are who act on a fixed plan of conduct, he seemed to make his wife happy by never contradicting her; he allowed her to do the talking, and was satisfied to move with the deliberate tenacity of an insect.

Dinah, adored for her beauty, in which she had no rival, and admired for her cleverness by the most gentlemanly men of the place, encouraged their admiration by conversations, for which, it was subsequently asserted, she prepared herself beforehand. Finding herself listened to with rapture, she soon began to listen to herself, enjoyed haranguing her audience, and at last regarded her friends as the chorus in a tragedy, there only to give her her cues. In fact, she had a very fine collection of phrases and ideas, derived either from books or by assimilating the opinions of her companions, and thus became a sort of mechanical instrument, going off on a round of phrases as soon as some chance remark released the spring. To do her justice, Dinah was choke full of knowledge, and read everything, even medical books, statistics, science, and jurisprudence; for she did not know how to spend her days when she had reviewed her flower-beds and given her orders to the gardener. Gifted with an excellent memory, and the talent which some women have for hitting on the right word, she could talk on any subject with the lucidity of a studied style. And so men came from Cosne, from la Charité, and from Nevers, on the right bank; from Léré, Vailly, Argent, Blancafort, and Aubigny, on the left bank, to be introduced to Madame de la Baudraye, as they used in Switzerland, to be introduced to Madame de Staël. Those who only once heard

the round of tunes emitted by this musical snuff-box went away amazed, and told such wonders of Dinah as made all the women jealous for ten leagues round.

There is an indescribable mental headiness in the admiration we inspire, or in the effect of playing a part, which fends off criticism from reaching the idol. An atmosphere, produced perhaps by unceasing nervous tension, forms a sort of halo, through which the world below is seen. How otherwise can we account for the perennial good faith which leads to so many repeated presentments of the same effects, and the constant ignoring of warnings given by children, such a terror to their parents, or by husbands, so familiar as they are with the peacock airs of their wives? Monsieur de la Baudraye had the frankness of a man who opens an umbrella at the first drop of rain. When his wife was started on the subject of negro emancipation or the improvement of convict prisons, he would take up his little blue cap and vanish without a sound, in the certainty of being able to get to Saint-Thibault to see off a cargo of puncheons, and return an hour later to find the discussion approaching a close. Or, if he had no business to attend to, he would go for a walk on the Mall, whence he commanded the lovely panorama of the Loire Valley, and take a draught of fresh air while his wife was performing a sonata in words, or a dialectical duet.

Once fairly established as a Superior Woman, Dinah was eager to prove her devotion to the most remarkable creations of art. She threw herself into the propaganda of the romantic school, including, under Art, poetry and painting, literature and sculpture, furniture and the opera. Thus she became a mediævalist. She was also interested in any treasures that dated from the Renaissance, and employed her allies as so many devoted commission agents. Soon after she was married, she had become possessed of the Rougets' furniture, sold at Issoudun early in 1824. She purchased some very good things in the Nivernais and the Haute-Loire. At the New Year and on her birthday her friends never failed to give her some curiosities. These fancies found favor in the eyes of

Monsieur de la Baudraye; they gave him an appearance of sacrificing a few crowns to his wife's taste. In point of fact, his land mania allowed him to think of nothing but the estate of Anzy.

These "antiquities" at that time cost much less than modern furniture. By the end of five or six years the ante-room, the dining-room, the two drawing-rooms, and the boudoir which Dinah had arranged on the ground floor of La Baudraye, every spot even to the staircase, were crammed with masterpieces collected in the four adjacent departments. These surroundings, which were called *queer* by the neighbors, were quite in harmony with Dinah. All these marvels, so soon to be the rage, struck the imagination of the strangers introduced to her; they came expecting something unusual; and they found their expectations surpassed when, behind a bower of flowers, they saw these catacombs full of old things, piled up as Sommerard used to pile them—that "Old Mortality" of furniture. And then these finds served as so many springs which, turned on by a question, played off an essay on Jean Goujon, Michel Columb, Germain Pilon, Boulle, Van Huysum, and Boucher, the great native painter of Le Berry; on Clodion, the carver of wood, on Venetian mirrors, on Brustolone, an Italian tenor who was the Michael-Angelo of boxwood and holm oak; on the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, on the glazes of Bernard de Palissy, the enamels of Petitot, the engravings of Albrecht Dürer—whom she called Dür; on illuminations on vellum, on Gothic architecture, early decorated, flamboyant and pure—enough to turn an old man's brain and fire a young man with enthusiasm.

Madame de la Baudraye, possessed with the idea of waking up Sancerre, tried to form a so-called literary circle. The Presiding Judge, Monsieur Boirouge, who happened to have a house and garden on his hands, part of the Popinot-Chandier property, favored the notion of this *coterie*. The wily Judge talked over the rules of the society with Madame de la Baudraye; he proposed to figure as one of the founders, and to let the house for fifteen years to the literary club. By the time

it had existed a year the members were playing dominoes, billiards, and bouillotte, and drinking mulled wine, punch, and liqueurs. A few elegant little suppers were then given, and some masked balls during the Carnival. As to literature—there were the newspapers. Politics and business were discussed. Monsieur de la Baudraye was constantly there—on his wife's account, as he said jestingly.

This result deeply grieved the Superior Woman, who despaired of Sancerre, and collected the wit of the neighborhood in her own drawing-room. Nevertheless, and in spite of the efforts of Messieurs de Chargebœuf, Gravier, and de Clagny, of the Abbé Duret and the two chief magistrates, of a young doctor and a young Assistant Judge—all blind admirers of Dinah's—there were occasions when, weary of discussion, they allowed themselves an excursion into the domain of agreeable frivolity which constitutes the common basis of worldly conversation. Monsieur Gravier called this "from grave to gay." The Abbé Duret's rubber made another pleasing variety on the monologues of the oracle. The three rivals, tired of keeping their minds up to the level of the "high range of discussion"—as they called their conversation—but not daring to confess it, would sometimes turn with ingratiating hints to the old priest.

"Monsieur le Curé is dying for his game," they would say.

The wily priest lent himself very readily to the little trick. He protested.

"We should lose too much by ceasing to listen to our inspired hostess!" and so he would incite Dinah's magnanimity to take pity at last on her dear Abbé.

This bold manœuvre, a device of the Sous-préfet's, was repeated with so much skill that Dinah never suspected her slaves of escaping to the prison yard, so to speak, of the card-table; and they would leave her one of the younger functionaries to harry.

One young landowner, and the dandy of Sancerre, fell away from Dinah's good graces in consequence of some rash demonstrations. After soliciting the honor of admission to this

little circle, where he flattered himself he could snatch the blossom from the constituted authorities who guarded it, he was so unfortunate as to yawn in the middle of an explanation Dinah was favoring him with—for the fourth time, it is true —of the philosophy of Kant. Monsieur de la Thaumassière, the grandson of the historian of Le Berry, was thenceforth regarded as a man entirely bereft of soul and brains.

The three devotees *en titre* each submitted to these exorbitant demands on their mind and attention, in hope of a crowning triumph, when at last Dinah should become human; for neither of them was so bold as to imagine that Dinah would give up her innocence as a wife till she should have lost all her illusions. In 1826, when she was surrounded by adorers, Dinah completed her twentieth year, and the Abbé Duret kept her in a sort of perfervid Catholicism; so her worshipers had to be content to overwhelm her with little attentions and small services, only too happy to be taken for the carpet-knights of this sovereign lady, by strangers admitted to spend an evening or two at La Baudraye.

"Madame de la Baudraye is a fruit that must be left to ripen." This was the opinion of Monsieur Gravier, who was waiting.

As to the lawyer, he wrote letters four pages long, to which Dinah replied in soothing speech as she walked, leaning on his arm, round and round the lawn after dinner.

Madame de la Baudraye, thus guarded by three passions, and always under the eye of her pious mother, escaped the malignity of slander. It was so evident to all Sancerre that no two of these three men would ever leave the third alone with Madame de la Baudraye, that their jealousy was a comedy to the lookers-on.

To reach Saint-Thibault from Cæsar's Gate there is a way much shorter than that by the ramparts, down what is known in mountainous districts as a *coursière,* called at Sancerre *le Casse-cou,* or Break-neck Alley. The name is significant as applied to a path down the steepest part of the hillside, thickly strewn with stones, and shut in by the high banks of the vine-

yards on each side. By way of the Break-neck the distance from Sancerre to La Baudraye is much abridged. The ladies of the place, jealous of the Sappho of Saint-Satur, were wont to walk on the Mall, looking down this Longchamp of the bigwigs, whom they would stop and engage in conversation—sometimes the Sous-préfet and sometimes the Public Prosecutor—and who would listen with every sign of impatience or uncivil absence of mind. As the turrets of La Baudraye are visible from the Mall, many a younger man came to contemplate the abode of Dinah while envying the ten or twelve privileged persons who might spend their afternoons with the Queen of the neighborhood.

Monsieur de la Baudraye was not slow to discover the advantage he, as Dinah's husband, held over his wife's adorers, and he made use of them without any disguise, obtaining a remission of taxes, and gaining two lawsuits. In every litigation he used the Public Prosecutor's name with such good effect that the matter was carried no further, and, like all undersized men, he was contentious and litigious in business, though in the gentlest manner.

At the same time, the more certainly guiltless she was, the less conceivable did Madame de la Baudraye's position seem to the prying eyes of these women. Frequently, at the house of the Présidente de Boirouge, the ladies of a certain age would spend a whole evening discussing the La Baudraye household, among themselves of course. They all had suspicions of a mystery, a secret such as always interests women who have had some experience of life. And, in fact, at La Baudraye one of those slow and monotonous conjugal tragedies was being played out which would have remained for ever unknown if the merciless scalpel of the nineteenth century, guided by the insistent demand for novelty, had not dissected the darkest corners of the heart, or at any rate those which the decency of past centuries left unopened. And that domestic drama sufficiently accounts for Dinah's immaculate virtue during her early married life.

A young lady, whose triumphs at school had been the outcome of her pride, and whose first scheme in life had been rewarded by a victory, was not likely to pause in such a brilliant career. Frail as Monsieur de la Baudraye might seem, he was really an unhoped-for good match for Mademoiselle Dinah Piédefer. But what was the hidden motive of this country landowner when, at forty-four, he married a girl of seventeen; and what could his wife make out of the bargain? This was the text of Dinah's first meditations.

The little man never behaved quite as his wife expected. To begin with, he allowed her to take the five precious acres now wasted in pleasure grounds round La Baudraye, and paid, almost with generosity, the seven or eight thousand francs required by Dinah for improvements in the house, enabling her to buy the furniture at the Rougets' sale at Issoudun, and to redecorate her rooms in various styles—Mediæval, Louis XIV., and Pompadour. The young wife found it difficult to believe that Monsieur de la Baudraye was so miserly as he was reputed, or else she must have great influence with him. This illusion lasted a year and a half.

After Monsieur de la Baudraye's second journey to Paris, Dinah discovered in him the Arctic coldness of a provincial miser whenever money was in question. The first time she asked for supplies she played the sweetest of the comedies of which Eve invented the secret; but the little man put it plainly to his wife that he gave her two hundred francs a month for her personal expenses, and paid Madame Piédefer twelve hundred francs a year as a charge on the lands of La Hautoy, and that this was two hundred francs a year more than was agreed to under the marriage settlement.

"I say nothing of the cost of housekeeping," he said in conclusion. "You may give your friends cake and tea in the evening, for you must have some amusement. But I, who spent but fifteen hundred francs a year as a bachelor, now spend six thousand, including rates and repairs, and this is rather too much in relation to the nature of our property. A winegrower is never sure of what his expenses may be—the mak-

ing, the duty, the casks—while the returns depend on a scorching day or a sudden frost. Small owners, like us, whose income is far from being fixed, must base their estimates on their minimum, for they have no means of making up a deficit or a loss. What would become of us if a wine merchant became bankrupt? In my opinion, promissory notes are so many cabbage-leaves. To live as we are living, we ought always to have a year's income in hand and count on no more than two-thirds of our returns."

Any form of resistance is enough to make a woman vow to subdue it; Dinah flung herself against a will of iron padded round with gentleness. She tried to fill the little man's soul with jealousy and alarms, but it was stockaded with insolent confidence. He left Dinah, when he went to Paris, with all the conviction of Médor in Angélique's fidelity. When she affected cold disdain, to nettle this changeling by the scorn a courtesan sometimes shows to her "protector," and which acts on him with the certainty of the screw of a winepress, Monsieur de la Baudraye gazed at his wife with fixed eyes, like those of a cat which, in the midst of domestic broils, waits till a blow is threatened before stirring from its place. The strange, speechless uneasiness that was perceptible under his mute indifference almost terrified the young wife of twenty; she could not at first understand the selfish quiescence of this man, who might be compared to a cracked pot, and who, in order to live, regulated his existence with the unchangeable regularity which a clockmaker requires of a clock. So the little man always evaded his wife, while she always hit out, as it were, ten feet above his head.

Dinah's fits of fury when she saw herself condemned never to escape from La Baudraye and Sancerre are more easily imagined than described—she who had dreamed of handling a fortune and managing the dwarf whom she, the giant, had at first humored in order to command. In the hope of some day making her appearance on the greater stage of Paris, she accepted the vulgar incense of her attendant knights with a view to seeing Monsieur de la Baudraye's name drawn from

the electoral urn; for she supposed him to be ambitious, after seeing him return thrice from Paris, each time a step higher on the social ladder. But when she struck on the man's heart, it was as though she had tapped on marble! The man who had been Receiver-General and Referendary, who was now Master of Appeals, Officer of the Legion of Honor, and Royal Commissioner, was but a mole throwing up its little hills round and round a vineyard! Then some lamentations were poured into the heart of the Public Prosecutor, of the Sous-préfet, even of Monsieur Gravier, and they all increased in their devotion to this sublime victim; for, like all women, she never mentioned her speculative schemes, and—again like all women—finding such speculation vain, she ceased to speculate.

Dinah, tossed by mental storms, was still undecided when, in the autumn of 1827, the news was told of the purchase by the Baron de la Baudraye of the estate of Anzy. Then the little old man showed an impulsion of pride and glee which for a few months changed the current of his wife's ideas; she fancied there was a hidden vein of greatness in the man when she found him applying for a patent of entail. In his triumph the Baron exclaimed:

"Dinah, you shall be a countess yet!"

There was then a patched-up reunion between the husband and wife, such as can never endure, and which only humiliated and fatigued a woman whose apparent superiority was unreal, while her unseen superiority was genuine. This whimsical medley is commoner than people think. Dinah, who was ridiculous from the perversity of her cleverness, had really great qualities of soul, but circumstances did not bring these rarer powers to light, while a provincial life debased the small change of her wit from day to day. Monsieur de la Baudraye, on the contrary, devoid of soul, of strength, and of wit, was fated to figure as a man of character, simply by pursuing a plan of conduct which he was too feeble to change.

There was in their lives a first phase, lasting six years, dur-

ing which Dinah, alas! became utterly provincial. In Paris there are several kinds of women: the duchess and the financier's wife, the ambassadress and the consul's wife, the wife of the minister who is a minister, and of him who is no longer a minister; then there is the lady—quite the lady—of the right bank of the Seine and of the left. But in the country there is but one kind of woman, and she, poor thing, is the provincial woman.

This remark points to one of the sores of modern society. It must be clearly understood: France in the nineteenth century is divided into two broad zones—Paris, and the provinces. The provinces jealous of Paris; Paris never thinking of the provinces but to demand money. Of old, Paris was the Capital of the provinces, and the Court ruled the Capital; now, all Paris is the Court, and all the country is the town.

However lofty, beautiful, and clever a girl born in any department of France may be on entering life, if, like Dinah Piédefer, she marries in the country and remains there, she inevitably becomes the provincial woman. In spite of every determination, the commonplace of second-rate ideas, indifference to dress, the culture of vulgar people, swamp the sublimer essence hidden in the youthful plant; all is over, it falls into decay. How should it be otherwise? From their earliest years girls bred in the country see none but provincials; they cannot imagine anything superior, their choice lies among mediocrities; provincial fathers marry their daughters to provincial sons; crossing the races is never thought of, and the brain inevitably degenerates, so that in many country towns intellect is as rare as the breed is hideous. Mankind becomes dwarfed in mind and body, for the fatal principle of conformity of fortune governs every matrimonial alliance. Men of talent, artists, superior brains—every bird of brilliant plumage flies to Paris. The provincial woman, inferior in herself, is also inferior through her husband. How is she to live happy under this crushing twofold consciousness?

But there is a third and terrible element besides her congenital and conjugal inferiority which contributes to make

the figure arid and gloomy; to reduce it, narrow it, distort it fatally. Is not one of the most flattering unctions a woman can lay to her soul the assurance of being something in the existence of a superior man, chosen by herself, wittingly, as if to have some revenge on marriage, wherein her tastes were so little consulted? But if in the country the husbands are inferior beings, the bachelors are no less so. When a provincial wife commits her "little sin," she falls in love with some so-called handsome native, some indigenous dandy, a youth who wears gloves and is supposed to ride well; but she knows at the bottom of her soul that her fancy is in pursuit of the commonplace, more or less well dressed. Dinah was preserved from this danger by the idea impressed upon her of her own superiority. Even if she had not been as carefully guarded during her early married life as she was by her mother, whose presence never weighed upon her till the day when she wanted to be rid of it, her pride, and her high sense of her own destinies, would have protected her. Flattered as she was to find herself surrounded by admirers, she saw no lover among them. No man here realized the poetical ideal which she and Anna Grossetête had been wont to sketch. When, stirred by the involuntary temptations suggested by the homage she received, she asked herself, "If I had to make a choice, who should it be?" she owned to a preference for Monsieur de Chargebœuf, a gentleman of good family, whose appearance and manners she liked, but whose cold nature, selfishness, and narrow ambition, never rising above a prefecture and a good marriage, repelled her. At a word from his family, who were alarmed lest he should be killed for an intrigue, the Vicomte had already deserted a woman he had loved in the town where he previously had been Sous-préfet.

Monsieur de Clagny, on the other hand, the only man whose mind appealed to hers, whose ambition was founded on love, and who knew what love means, Dinah thought perfectly odious. When Dinah saw herself condemned to six years' residence at Sancerre she was on the point of accepting the devotion of Monsieur le Vicomte de Chargebœuf; but he was ap-

pointed to a prefecture and left the district. To Monsieur de Clagny's great satisfaction, the new Sous-préfet was a married man whose wife made friends with Dinah. The lawyer had now no rival to fear but Monsieur Gravier. Now Monsieur Gravier was the typical man of forty of whom women make use while they laugh at him, whose hopes they intentionally and remorselessly encourage, as we are kind to a beast of burden. In six years, among all the men who were introduced to her from twenty leagues round, there was not one in whose presence Dinah was conscious of the excitement caused by personal beauty, by a belief in promised happiness, by the impact of a superior soul, or the anticipation of a love affair, even an unhappy one.

Thus none of Dinah's choicest faculties had a chance of developing; she swallowed many insults to her pride, which was constantly suffering under the husband who so calmly walked the stage as supernumerary in the drama of her life. Compelled to bury her wealth of love, she showed only the surface to the world. Now and then she would try to rouse herself, try to form some manly resolution; but she was kept in leading strings by the need for money. And so, slowly and in spite of the ambitious protests and grievous recriminations of her own mind, she underwent the provincial metamorphosis here described. Each day took with it a fragment of her spirited determination. She had laid down a rule for the care of her person, which she gradually departed from. Though at first she kept up with the fashions and the little novelties of elegant life, she was obliged to limit her purchases by the amount of her allowance. Instead of six hats, caps, or gowns, she resigned herself to one gown each season. She was so much admired in a certain bonnet that she made it do duty for two seasons. So it was in everything.

Not unfrequently her artistic sense led her to sacrifice the requirements of her person to secure some bit of Gothic furniture. By the seventh year she had come so low as to think it convenient to have her morning dresses made at home by the best needlewoman in the neighborhood; and her mother, her

husband, and her friends pronounced her charming in these inexpensive costumes which did credit to her taste. Her ideas were imitated! As she had no standard of comparison, Dinah fell into the snares that surround the provincial woman. If a Parisian woman's hips are too narrow or too full, her inventive wit and the desire to please help to find some heroic remedy; if she has some defect, some ugly spot, or small disfigurement, she is capable of making it an adornment; this is often seen; but the provincial woman—never! If her waist is too short, and her figure ill balanced, well, she makes up her mind to the worst, and her adorers—or they do not adore her—must take her as she is, while the Parisian always insists on being taken for what she is not. Hence the preposterous bustles, the audacious flatness, the ridiculous fulness, the hideous outlines ingeniously displayed, to which a whole town will become accustomed, but which are so astounding when a provincial woman makes her appearance in Paris or among Parisians. Dinah, who was extremely slim, showed it off to excess, and never knew the moment when it became ridiculous: when, reduced by the dull weariness of her life, she looked like a skeleton in clothes; and her friends, seeing her every day, did not observe the gradual change in her appearance.

This is one of the natural results of a provincial life. In spite of marriage, a young woman preserves her beauty for some time, and the town is proud of her; but everybody sees her every day, and when people meet every day their perception is dulled. If, like Madame de la Baudraye, she loses her color, it is scarcely noticed; or, again, if she flushes a little, that is intelligible and interesting. A little neglect is thought charming, and her face is so carefully studied, so well known, that slight changes are scarcely noticed, and regarded at last as "beauty spots." When Dinah ceased to have a new dress with a new season, she seemed to have made a concession to the philosophy of the place.

It is the same with matters of speech, choice of words and ideas, as it is with matters of feeling. The mind can rust as

well as the body if it is not rubbed up in Paris; but the thing on which provincialism most sets its stamp is gesture, gait, and movement; these soon lose the briskness which Paris constantly keeps alive. The provincial is used to walk and move in a world devoid of accident or change, there is nothing to be avoided; so in Paris she walks on as raw recruits do, never remembering that there may be hindrances, for there are none in her way in her native place, where she is known, where she is always in her place, and every one makes way for her. Thus she loses all the charm of the unforeseen.

And have you ever noticed the effect on human beings of a life in common? By the ineffaceable instinct of simian mimicry they all tend to copy each other. Each one, without knowing it, acquires the gestures, the tone of voice, the manner, the attitudes, the very countenance of others. In six years Dinah had sunk to the pitch of the society she lived in. As she acquired Monsieur de Clagny's ideas she assumed his tone of voice; she unconsciously fell into masculine manners from seeing none but men; she fancied that by laughing at what was ridiculous in them she was safe from catching it; but, as often happens, some hue of what she laughed at remained in grain.

A Parisian woman sees so many examples of good taste that a contrary result ensues. In Paris women learn to seize the hour and moment when they may appear to advantage; while Madame de la Baudraye, accustomed to take the stage, acquired an indefinable theatrical and domineering manner, the air of a *prima donna* coming forward on the boards, of which ironical smiles would soon have cured her in the capital.

But after she had acquired this stock of absurdities, and, deceived by her worshipers, imagined them to be added graces, a moment of terrible awakening came upon her like the fall of an avalanche from a mountain. In one day she was crushed by a frightful comparison.

In 1822, after the departure of Monsieur de Chargebœuf, she was excited by the anticipation of a little pleasure; she was expecting the Baronne de Fontaine. Anna's husband,

who was now Director-General under the Minister of Finance, took advantage of leave of absence on the occasion of his father's death to take his wife to Italy. Anna wished to spend a day at Sancerre with her school-friend. This meeting was strangely disastrous. Anna, who at school had been far less handsome than Dinah, now, as Baronne de Fontaine, was a thousand times handsomer than the Baronne de la Baudraye, in spite of her fatigue and her traveling dress. Anna stepped out of an elegant traveling chaise loaded with Paris milliners' boxes, and she had with her a lady's maid, whose airs quite frightened Dinah. All the difference between a woman of Paris and a provincial was at once evident to Dinah's intelligent eye; she saw herself as her friend saw her—and Anna found her altered beyond recognition. Anna spent six thousand francs a year on herself alone, as much as kept the whole household at La Baudraye.

In twenty-four hours the friends had exchanged many confidences; and the Parisian, seeing herself so far superior to the phœnix of Mademoiselle Chamarolles' school, showed her provincial friend such kindness, such attentions, while giving her certain explanations, as were so many stabs to Dinah, though she perfectly understood that Anna's advantages all lay on the surface, while her own were for ever buried.

When Anna had left, Madame de la Baudraye, by this time two-and-twenty, fell into the depths of despair.

"What is it that ails you?" asked Monsieur de Clagny, seeing her so dejected.

"Anna," said she, "has learned to live, while I have been learning to endure."

A tragi-comedy was, in fact, being enacted in Madame de la Baudraye's house, in harmony with her struggles over money matters and her successive transformations—a drama to which no one but Monsieur de Clagny and the Abbé Duret ever knew the clue, when Dinah in sheer idleness, or perhaps sheer vanity, revealed the secret of her anonymous fame.

Though a mixture of verse and prose is a monstrous anomaly in French literature, there must be exceptions to the

rule. This tale will be one of the two instances in these Studies of violation of the laws of narrative; for to give a just idea of the unconfessed struggle which may excuse, though it cannot absolve Dinah, it is necessary to give an analysis of a poem which was the outcome of her deep despair.

Her patience and her resignation alike broken by the departure of the Vicomte de Chargebœuf, Dinah took the worthy Abbé's advice to exhale her evil thoughts in verse—a proceeding which perhaps accounts for some poets.

"You will find such relief as those who write epitaphs or elegies over those whom they have lost. Pain is soothed in the heart as lines surge up in the brain."

This strange production caused a great ferment in the departments of the Allier, the Nièvre, and the Cher, proud to possess a poet capable of rivalry with the glories of Paris. *Paquita la Sevillane,* by *Jan Diaz,* was published in the *Écho du Morvan,* a review which for eighteen months maintained its existence in spite of provincial indifference. Some knowing persons at Nevers declared that Jan Diaz was making fun of the new school, just then bringing out its eccentric verse, full of vitality and imagery, and of brilliant effects produced by defying the Muse under pretext of adapting German, English, and Romanesque mannerisms.

The poem began with this ballad:

Ah! if you knew the fragrant plain,
The air, the sky, of golden Spain,
Its fervid noons, its balmy spring,
Sad daughters of the northern gloom,
Of love, of heav'n, of native home,
You never would presume to sing!

For men are there of other mould
Than those who live in this dull cold.
And there to music low and sweet
Sevillian maids, from eve till dawn,
Dance lightly on the moonlit lawn
In satin shoes, on dainty feet.

Ah, you would be the first to blush
Over your dancers' romp and rush,
And your too hideous carnival,
That turns your cheeks all chill and blue,
And skips the mud in hob-nail'd shoe—
A truly dismal festival.

To pale-faced girls, and in a squalid room,
Paquita sang; the murky town beneath
Was Rouen, whence the slender spires rise
To chew the storm with teeth.
Rouen so hideous, noisy, full of rage—

And here followed a magnificent description of Rouen—where Dinah had never been—written with the affected brutality which, a little later, inspired so many imitations of Juvenal; a contrast drawn between the life of a manufacturing town and the careless life of Spain, between the love of Heaven and of human beauty, and the worship of machinery, in short, between poetry and sordid money-making.

Then Jan Diaz accounted for Paquita's horror of Normandy by saying:

Seville, you see, had been her native home,
Seville, where skies are blue and evening sweet.
She, at thirteen, the sovereign of the town,
Had lovers at her feet.

For her three Toreadors had gone to death
Or victory; the prize to be a kiss—
One kiss from those red lips of sweetest breath—
A longed-for touch of bliss!

The features of the Spanish girl's portrait have served so often as those of the courtesan in so many self-styled *poems*, that it would be tiresome to quote here the hundred lines of description. To judge of the lengths to which audacity had carried Dinah, it will be enough to give the conclusion. According to Madame de la Baudraye's ardent pen, Paquita was

so entirely created for love that she can hardly have met with a knight worthy of her; for

. . . . In her passionate fire
Every man would have swooned from the heat,
When she at love's feast, in her fervid desire,
As yet had but taken her seat.

"And yet she could quit the joys of Seville, its woods and fields of orange-trees, for a Norman soldier who won her love and carried her away to his hearth and home. She did not weep for her Andalusia, the Soldier was her whole joy. . . . But the day came when he was compelled to start for Russia in the footsteps of the great Emperor."

Nothing could be more dainty than the description of the parting between the Spanish girl and the Normandy Captain of Artillery, who, in the delirium of passion expressed with feeling worthy of Byron, exacted from Paquita a vow of absolute fidelity, in the Cathedral at Rouen in front of the altar of the Blessed Virgin, who

Though a Maid is a woman, and never forgives
When lovers are false to their vows.

A large part of the poem was devoted to describing Paquita's sufferings when alone in Rouen waiting till the campaign was over; she stood writhing at the window bars as she watched happy couples go by; she suppressed her passion in her heart with a determination that consumed her; she lived on narcotics, and exhausted herself in dreams.

Almost she died, but still her heart was true;
And when at last her soldier came again,
He found her beauty ever fresh and new—
He had not loved in vain!

"But he, pale and frozen by the cold of Russia, chilled to the very marrow, met his yearning fair one with a melancholy smile."

The whole poem was written up to this situation, which was worked out with such vigor and boldness as too entirely justified the Abbé Duret.

Paquita, on reaching the limits set to real love, did not, like Julie and Héloïse, throw herself into the ideal; no, she rushed into the paths of vice, which is, no doubt, shockingly natural; but she did it without any touch of magnificence, for lack of means, as it would be difficult to find in Rouen men impassioned enough to place Paquita in a suitable setting of luxury and splendor. This horrible realism, emphasized by gloomy poetic feeling, had inspired some passages such as modern poetry is too free with, rather too like the flayed anatomical figures known to artists as *écorchés*. Then, by a highly philosophical revulsion, after describing the house of ill-fame where the Andalusian ended her days, the writer came back to the ballad at the opening:

Paquita now is faded, shrunk, and old,
But she it was who sang·

"If you but knew the fragrant plain,
The air, the sky, of golden Spain," etc.

The gloomy vigor of this poem, running to about six hundred lines, and serving as a powerful foil, to use a painter's word, to the two *séguidillas* at the beginning and end, the masculine utterance of inexpressible grief alarmed the woman who found herself admired by three departments, under the black cloak of the anonymous. While she fully enjoyed the intoxicating delights of success, Dinah dreaded the malignity of provincial society, where more than one woman, if the secret should slip out, would certainly find points of resemblance between the writer and Paquita. Reflection came too late; Dinah shuddered with shame at having made "copy" of some of her woes.

"Write no more," said the Abbé Duret. "You will cease to be a woman; you will be a poet."

Moulins, Nevers, Bourges were searched to find Jan Diaz; but Dinah was impenetrable. To remove any evil impression,

in case any unforeseen chance should betray her name, she wrote a charming poem in two cantos on *The Mass-Oak,* a legend of the Nivernais:

"Once on a time the folks of Nevers and the folks of Saint-Saulge, at war with each other, came at daybreak to fight a battle, in which one or other should perish, and met in the forest of Faye. And then there stood between them, under an oak, a priest whose aspect in the morning sun was so commanding that the foes at his bidding heard Mass as he performed it under the oak, and at the words of the Gospel they made friends."—The oak is still shown in the forest of Faye.

This poem, immeasurably superior to *Paquita la Sevillane,* was far less admired.

After these two attempts Madame de la Baudraye, feeling herself a poet, had a light on her brow and a flash in her eyes that made her handsomer than ever. She cast longing looks at Paris, aspiring to fame—and fell back into her den of La Baudraye, her daily squabbles with her husband, and her little circle, where everybody's character, intentions, and remarks were too well known not to have become a bore. Though she found relief from her dreary life in literary work, and poetry echoed loudly in her empty life, though she thus found an outlet for her energies, literature increased her hatred of the gray and ponderous provincial atmosphere.

When, after the Revolution of 1830, the glory of George Sand was reflected on Le Berry, many a town envied La Châtre the privilege of having given birth to this rival of Madame de Staël and Camille Maupin, and were ready to do homage to minor feminine talent. Thus there arose in France a vast number of tenth Muses, young girls or young wives tempted from a silent life by the bait of glory. Very strange doctrines were proclaimed as to the part women should play in society. Though the sound common sense which lies at the root of the French nature was not perverted, women were suffered to express ideas and profess opinions which they would not have owned to a few years previously.

Monsieur de Clagny took advantage of this outbreak of freedom to collect the works of Jan Diaz in a small volume printed by Desroziers at Moulins. He wrote a little notice of the author, too early snatched from the world of letters, which was amusing to those who were in the secret, but which even then had not the merit of novelty. Such practical jokes, capital so long as the author remains unknown, fall rather flat if subsequently the poet stands confessed.

From this point of view, however, the memoir of Jan Diaz, born at Bourges in 1807, the son of a Spanish prisoner, may very likely some day deceive the compiler of some *Universal Biography.* Nothing is overlooked; neither the names of the professors at the Bourges College, nor those of his deceased schoolfellows, such as Lousteau, Bianchon, and other famous natives of the province, who, it is said, knew the dreamy, melancholy boy, and his precocious bent towards poetry. An elegy called *Tristesse* (Melancholy), written at school; the two poems *Paquita la Sevillane* and *Le Chêne de la Messe;* three sonnets, a description of the Cathedral and the House of Jacques Cœur at Bourges, with a tale called *Carola,* published as the work he was engaged on at the time of his death, constituted the whole of these literary remains; and the poet's last hours, full of misery and despair, could not fail to wring the hearts of the feeling public of the Nièvre, the Bourbonnais, the Cher, and the Morvan, where he died near Château-Chinon, unknown to all, even to the woman he had loved!

Of this little yellow paper volume two hundred copies were printed; one hundred and fifty were sold—about fifty in each department. This average of tender and poetic souls in three departments of France is enough to revive the enthusiasm of writers as to the *Furia Francese,* which nowadays is more apt to expend itself in business than in books.

When Monsieur de Clagny had given away a certain number of copies, Dinah still had seven or eight, wrapped up in the newspapers which had published notices of the work. Twenty copies forwarded to the Paris papers were swamped in the editors' offices. Nathan was taken in as well as several of his

fellow-countrymen of Le Berry, and wrote an article on the great man, in which he credited him with all the fine qualities we discover in those who are dead and buried.

Lousteau, warned by his fellow-schoolfellows, who could not remember Jan Diaz, waited for information from Sancerre, and learned that Jan Diaz was a pseudonym assumed by a woman.

Then, in and around Sancerre, Madame de la Baudraye became the rage; she was the future rival of George Sand. From Sancerre to Bourges a poem was praised which, at any other time, would certainly have been hooted. The provincial public—like every French public, perhaps—does not share the love of the King of the French for the happy medium: it lifts you to the skies or drags you in the mud.

By this time the good Abbé, Madame de la Baudraye's counselor, was dead; he would certainly have prevented her rushing into public life. But three years of work without recognition weighed on Dinah's soul, and she accepted the clatter of fame as a substitute for her disappointed ambitions. Poetry and dreams of celebrity, which had lulled her grief since her meeting with Anna Grossetête, no longer sufficed to exhaust the activity of her morbid heart. The Abbé Duret, who had talked of the world when the voice of religion was impotent, who understood Dinah, and promised her a happy future by assuring her that God would compensate her for sufferings bravely endured,—this good old man could no longer stand between the opening to sin and the handsome young woman he had called his daughter.

The wise old priest had more than once endeavored to enlighten Dinah as to her husband's character, telling her that the man could hate; but women are not ready to believe in such force in weak natures, and hatred is too constantly in action not to be a vital force. Dinah, finding her husband incapable of love, denied him the power to hate.

"Do not confound hatred and vengeance," said the Abbé. "They are two different sentiments. One is the instinct of small minds; the other is the outcome of law which great

souls obey. God is avenged, but He does not hate. Hatred is a vice of narrow souls; they feed it with all their meanness, and make it a pretext for sordid tyranny. So beware of offending Monsieur de la Baudraye; he would forgive an infidelity, because he could make capital of it, but he would be doubly implacable if you should touch him on the spot so cruelly wounded by Monsieur Milaud of Nevers, and would make your life unendurable."

Now, at the time when the whole countryside—Nevers and Sancerre, Le Morvan and Le Berry—was priding itself on Madame de la Baudraye, and lauding her under the name of Jan Diaz, "little La Baudraye" felt her glory a mortal blow. He alone knew the secret source of *Paquita la Sevillane.* When this terrible work was spoken of, everybody said of Dinah—"Poor woman! Poor soul!"

The women rejoiced in being able to pity her who had so long oppressed them; never had Dinah seemed to stand higher in the eyes of the neighborhood.

The shriveled old man, more wrinkled, yellower, feebler than ever, gave no sign; but Dinah sometimes detected in his eyes, as he looked at her, a sort of icy venom which gave the lie to his increased politeness and gentleness. She understood at last that this was not, as she had supposed, a mere domestic squabble; but when she forced an explanation with her "insect," as Monsieur Gravier called him, she found the cold, hard impassibility of steel. She flew into a passion; she reproached him for her life these eleven years past; she made—intentionally—what women call a scene. But "little La Baudraye" sat in an armchair with his eyes shut, and listened phlegmatically to the storm. And, as usual, the dwarf got the better of his wife. Dinah saw that she had done wrong in writing; she vowed never to write another line, and she kept her vow.

Then was there desolation in the Sancerrois.

"Why did not Madame de la Baudraye compose any more verses?" was the universal cry.

At this time Madame de la Baudraye had no enemies; every

one rushed to see her, not a week passed without fresh introductions. The wife of the presiding judge, an august *bourgeoise, née* Popinot-Chandier, desired her son, a youth of two-and-twenty, to pay his humble respects at La Baudraye, and flattered herself that she might see her Gatien in the good graces of this Superior Woman.—The words Superior Woman had superseded the absurd nickname of *The Sappho of Saint-Satur.*—This lady, who for nine years had led the opposition, was so delighted at the good reception accorded to her son, that she became loud in her praises of the Muse of Sancerre.

"After all," she exclaimed, in reply to a tirade from Madame de Clagny, who hated her husband's supposed mistress, "she is the handsomest and cleverest woman in the whole province!"

After scrambling through so many brambles and setting off on so many different roads, after dreaming of love in splendor and scenting the darkest dramas, thinking such terrible joys would be cheaply purchased so weary was she of her dreary existence, one day Dinah fell into the pit she had sworn to avoid. Seeing Monsieur de Clagny always sacrificing himself, and at last refusing a high appointment in Paris, where his family wanted to see him, she said to herself, "He loves me!" She vanquished her repulsion, and seemed willing to reward so much constancy.

It was to this impulse of generosity on her part that a coalition was due, formed in Sancerre to secure the return of Monsieur de Clagny at the next elections. Madame de la Baudraye had dreamed of going to Paris in the wake of the new deputy.

But, in spite of the most solemn promises, the hundred and fifty votes to be recorded in favor of this adorer of the lovely Dinah—who hoped to see this defender of the widow and the orphan wearing the gown of the Keeper of the Seals—figured as an imposing minority of fifty votes. The jealousy of the Président de Boirouge, and Monsieur Gravier's hatred, for he believed in the candidate's supremacy in Dinah's heart, had been worked upon by a young Sous-préfet; and for this

worthy deed the allies got the young man made a préfet elsewhere.

"I shall never cease to regret," said he, as he quitted Sancerre, "that I did not succeed in pleasing Madame de la Baudraye; that would have made my triumph complete!"

The household that was thus racked by domestic troubles was calm on the surface; here were two ill-assorted but resigned beings, and the indescribable propriety, the lie that society insists on, and which to Dinah was an unendurable yoke. Why did she long to throw off the mask she had worn for twelve years? Whence this weariness which, every day, increased her hope of finding herself a widow?

The reader who has noted all the phases of her existence will have understood the various illusions by which Dinah, like many another woman, had been deceived. After an attempt to master Monsieur de la Baudraye, she had indulged the hope of becoming a mother. Between those miserable disputes over household matters and the melancholy conviction as to her fate, quite a long time had elapsed. Then, when she had looked for consolation, the consoler, Monsieur de Chargebœuf, had left her. Thus, the overwhelming temptation which commonly causes women to sin had hitherto been absent. For if there are, after all, some women who make straight for unfaithfulness, are there not many more who cling to hope, and do not fall till they have wandered long in a labyrinth of secret woes?

Such was Dinah. She had so little impulse to fail in her duty, that she did not care enough for Monsieur de Clagny to forgive him his defeat.

Then the move to the Château d'Anzy, the rearrangement of her collected treasures and curiosities, which derived added value from the splendid setting which Philibert de Lorme seemed to have planned on purpose for this museum, occupied her for several months, giving her leisure to meditate one of those decisive steps that startle the public, ignorant of the motives which, however, it sometimes discovers by dint of gossip and suppositions.

Madame de la Baudraye had been greatly struck by the reputation of Lousteau, who was regarded as a lady's man of the first water in consequence of his intimacies among actresses; she was anxious to know him; she read his books, and was fired with enthusiasm, less perhaps for his talents than for his successes with women; and to attract him to the country, she started the notion that it was obligatory on Sancerre to return one of its great men at the elections. She made Gatien Boirouge write to the great physician Bianchon, whom he claimed as a cousin through the Popinots. Then she persuaded an old friend of the departed Madame Lousteau to stir up the journalist's ambitions by letting him know that certain persons in Sancerre were firmly bent on electing a deputy from among the distinguished men in Paris.

Tired of her commonplace neighbors, Madame de la Baudraye would thus at last meet really illustrious men, and might give her fall the lustre of fame.

Neither Lousteau nor Bianchon replied; they were waiting perhaps till the holidays. Bianchon, who had won his professor's chair the year before after a brilliant contest, could not leave his lectures.

In the month of September, when the vintage was at its height, the two Parisians arrived in their native province, and found it absorbed in the unremitting toil of the wine-crop of 1836; there could therefore be no public demonstration in their favor. "We have fallen flat," said Lousteau to his companion, in the slang of the stage.

In 1836, Lousteau, worn by sixteen years of struggle in the Capital, and aged quite as much by pleasure as by penury, hard work, and disappointments, looked eight-and-forty, though he was no more than thirty-seven. He was already bald, and had assumed a Byronic air in harmony with his early decay and the lines furrowed in his face by over-indulgence in champagne. He ascribed these signs-manual of dissipation to the severities of a literary life, declaring that the Press was murderous; and he gave it to be understood that it consumed superior talents, so as to lend a grace to his

exhaustion. In his native town he thought proper to exaggerate his affected contempt of life and his spurious misanthropy. Still, his eyes could flash with fire like a volcano supposed to be extinct, and he endeavored, by dressing fashionably, to make up for the lack of youth that might strike a woman's eye.

Horace Bianchon, who wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, was fat and burly, as beseems a fashionable physician, with a patriarchal air, his hair thick and long, a prominent brow, the frame of a hard worker, and the calm expression of a philosopher. This somewhat prosaic personality set off his more frivolous companion to advantage.

The two great men remained unrecognized during a whole morning at the inn where they had put up, and it was only by chance that Monsieur de Clagny heard of their arrival. Madame de la Baudraye, in despair at this, despatched Gatien Boirouge, who had no vineyards, to beg the two gentlemen to spend a few days at the Château d'Anzy. For the last year Dinah had played the châtelaine, and spent the winter only at La Baudraye. Monsieur Gravier, the Public Prosecutor, the Presiding Judge, and Gatien Boirouge combined to give a banquet to the great men, to meet the literary personages of the town.

On hearing that the beautiful Madame de la Baudraye was Jan Diaz, the Parisians went to spend three days at Anzy, fetched in a sort of wagonette driven by Gatien himself. The young man, under a genuine illusion, spoke of Madame de la Baudraye not only as the handsomest woman in those parts, a woman so superior that she might give George Sand a qualm, but as a woman who would produce a great sensation in Paris. Hence the extreme though suppressed astonishment of Doctor Bianchon and the waggish journalist when they beheld, on the garden steps of Anzy, a lady dressed in thin black cashmere with a deep tucker, in effect like a riding-habit cut short, for they quite understood the pretentiousness of such extreme simplicity. Dinah also wore a black velvet cap, like that in

the portrait of Raphael, and below it her hair fell in thick curls. This attire showed off a rather pretty figure, fine eyes, and handsome eyelids somewhat faded by the weariful life that has been described. In Le Berry the singularity of this *artistic* costume was a cloak for the romantic affectations of the Superior Woman.

On seeing the affectations of their too amiable hostess—which were, indeed, affectations of soul and mind—the friends glanced at each other, and put on a deeply serious expression to listen to Madame de la Baudraye, who made them a set speech of thanks for coming to cheer the monotony of her days. Dinah walked her guests round and round the lawn, ornamented with large vases of flowers, which lay in front of the Chateâu d'Anzy.

"How is it," said Lousteau, the practical joker, "that so handsome a woman as you, and apparently so superior, should have remained buried in the country? What do you do to make life endurable?"

"Ah! that is the crux," said the lady. "It is unendurable. Utter despair or dull resignation—there is no third alternative; that is the arid soil in which our existence is rooted, and on which a thousand stagnant ideas fall; they cannot fertilize the ground, but they supply food for the etiolated flowers of our desert souls. Never believe in indifference! Indifference is either despair or resignation. Then each woman takes up the pursuit which, according to her character, seems to promise some amusement. Some rush into jam-making and washing, household management, the rural joys of the vintage or the harvest, bottling fruit, embroidering handkerchiefs, the cares of motherhood, the intrigues of a country town. Others torment a much-enduring piano, which, at the end of seven years, sounds like an old kettle, and ends its asthmatic life at the Château d'Anzy. Some pious dames talk over the different brands of the Word of God—the Abbé Fritaud as compared with the Abbé Guinard. They play cards in the evening, dance with the same partners for twelve years running, in the same rooms, at the same dates. This delightful

life is varied by solemn walks on the Mall, visits of politeness among the women, who ask each other where they bought their gowns.

"Conversation is bounded on the south by remarks on the intrigues lying hidden under the stagnant water of provincial life, on the north by proposed marriages, on the west by jealousies, and on the east by sour remarks.

"And so," she went on, striking an attitude, "you see a woman wrinkled at nine-and-twenty, ten years before the time fixed by the rules of Doctor Bianchon, a woman whose skin is ruined at an early age, who turns as yellow as a quince when she is yellow at all—we have seen some turn green. When we have reached that point, we try to justify our normal condition; then we turn and rend the terrible passion of Paris with teeth as sharp as rat's teeth. We have Puritan women here, sour enough to tear the laces of Parisian finery, and eat out all the poetry of your Parisian beauties, who undermine the happiness of others while they cry up their walnuts and rancid bacon, glorify this squalid mouse-hole, and the dingy color and conventual smell of our delightful life at Sancerre."

"I admire such courage, madame," said Bianchon. "When we have to endure such misfortunes, it is well to have the wit to make a virtue of necessity."

Amazed at the brilliant move by which Dinah thus placed provincial life at the mercy of her guests, in anticipation of their sarcasms, Gatien Boirouge nudged Lousteau's elbow, with a glance and a smile, which said:

"Well! did I say too much?"

"But, madame," said Lousteau, "you are proving that we are still in Paris. I shall steal this gem of description; it will be worth ten francs to me in an article."

"Oh, monsieur," she retorted, "never trust provincial women."

"And why not?" said Lousteau.

Madame de la Baudraye was wily enough—an innocent form of cunning, to be sure—to show the two Parisians, one

of whom she would choose to be her conquerer, the snare into which he would fall, reflecting that she would have the upper hand at the moment when he should cease to see it.

"When you first come," said she, "you laugh at us. Then when you have forgotten the impression of Paris brilliancy, and see us in our own sphere, you pay court to us, if only as a pastime. And you, who are famous for your past passions, will be the object of attentions which will flatter you. Then take care!" cried Dinah, with a coquettish gesture, raising herself above provincial absurdities and Lousteau's irony by her own sarcastic speech. "When a poor little country-bred woman has an eccentric passion for some superior man, some Parisian who has wandered into the provinces, it is to her something more than a sentiment; she makes it her occupation and part of all her life. There is nothing more dangerous than the attachment of such a woman; she compares, she studies, she reflects, she dreams; and she will not give up her dream, she thinks still of the man she loves when he has ceased to think of her.

"Now one of the catastrophes that weigh most heavily on a woman in the provinces is that abrupt termination of her passion which is so often seen in England. In the country, a life under minute observation as keen as an Indian's compels a woman either to keep on the rails or to start aside like a steam engine wrecked by an obstacle. The strategies of love, the coquetting which form half the composition of a Parisian woman, are utterly unknown here."

"That is true," said Lousteau. "There is in a country-bred woman's heart a store of surprises, as in some toys."

"Dear me!" Dinah went on, "a woman will have spoken to you three times in the course of a winter, and without your knowing it, you will be lodged in her heart. Then comes a picnic, an excursion, what not, and all is said—or, if you prefer it, all is done! This conduct, which seems odd to unobserving persons, is really very natural. A poet, such as you are, or a philosopher, an observer, like Doctor Bianchon, instead of villifying the provincial woman and believing her de-

praved, would be able to guess the wonderful unrevealed poetry, every chapter, in short, of the sweet romance of which the last phase falls to the benefit of some happy sub-lieutenant or some provincial bigwig."

"The provincial women I have met in Paris," said Lousteau, "were, in fact, rapid in their proceedings——"

"My word, they are strange," said the lady, giving a significant shrug of her shoulders.

"They are like the playgoers who book for the second performance, feeling sure that the piece will not fail," replied the journalist.

"And what is the cause of all these woes?" asked Bianchon.

"Paris is the monster that brings us grief," replied the Superior Woman. "The evil is seven leagues round, and devastates the whole land. Provincial life is not self-existent. It is only when a nation is divided into fifty minor states that each can have a physiognomy of its own, and then a woman reflects the glory of the sphere where she reigns. This social phenomenon, I am told, may be seen in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany; but in France, as in every country where there is but one capital, a dead level of manners must necessarily result from centralization."

"Then you would say that manners could only recover their individuality and native distinction by the formation of a federation of French states into one empire?" said Lousteau.

"That is hardly to be wished, for France would have to conquer too many countries," said Bianchon.

"This misfortune is unknown to England," exclaimed Dinah. "London does not exert such tyranny as that by which Paris oppresses France—for which, indeed, French ingenuity will at last find a remedy; however, it has a worse disease in its vile hypocrisy, which is a far greater evil!"

"The English aristocracy," said Lousteau, hastening to put a word in, for he foresaw a Byronic paragraph, "has the advantage over ours of assimilating every form of superiority; it lives in the midst of magnificent parks; it is in London for no more than two months. It lives in the country, flourishing there, and making it flourish."

"Yes," said Madame de la Baudraye, "London is the capital of trade and speculation, and the centre of government. The aristocracy hold a 'mote' there for sixty days only; it gives and takes the passwords of the day, looks in on the legislative cookery, reviews the girls to marry, the carriages to be sold, exchanges greetings, and is away again; and is so far from amusing, that it cannot bear itself for more than the few days known as 'the season.' "

"Hence," said Lousteau, hoping to stop this nimble tongue by an epigram, "in Perfidious Albion, as the *Constitutionnel* has it, you may happen to meet a charming woman in any part of the kingdom."

"But charming *English* women!" replied Madame de la Baudraye with a smile. "Here is my mother, I will introduce you," said she, seeing Madame Piédefer coming towards them.

Having introduced the two Paris lions to the ambitious skeleton that called itself woman under the name of Madame Piédefer—a tall, lean personage with a red face, teeth that were doubtfully genuine, and hair that was undoubtedly dyed, Dinah left her visitors to themselves for a few minutes.

"Well," said Gatien to Lousteau, "what do you think of her?"

"I think that the clever woman of Sancerre is simply the greatest chatterbox," replied the journalist.

"A woman who wants to see you deputy!" cried Gatien. "An angel!"

"Forgive me, I forgot you were in love with her," said Lousteau. "Forgive the cynicism of an old scamp.—Ask Bianchon; I have no illusions left. I see things as they are. The woman has evidently dried up her mother like a partridge left to roast at too fierce a fire."

Gatien de Boirouge contrived to let Madame de la Baudraye know what the journalist had said of her in the course of the dinner, which was copious, not to say splendid, and the lady took care not to talk too much while it was proceeding. This lack of conversation betrayed Gatien's indiscretion.

Étienne tried to regain his footing, but all Dinah's advances were directed to Bianchon.

However, half-way through the evening, the Baroness was gracious to Lousteau again. Have you never observed what great meanness may be committed for small ends? Thus the haughty Dinah, who would not sacrifice herself for a fool, who in the depths of the country led such a wretched life of struggles, of suppressed rebellion, of unuttered poetry, who to get away from Lousteau had climbed the highest and steepest peak of her scorn, and who would not have come down if she had seen the sham Byron at her feet, suddenly stepped off it as she recollected her album.

Madame de la Baudraye had caught the mania for autographs; she possessed an oblong volume which deserved the name of album better than most, as two-thirds of the pages were still blank. The Baronne de Fontaine, who had kept it for three months, had with great difficulty obtained a line from Rossini, six bars written by Meyerbeer, the four lines that Victor Hugo writes in every album, a verse from Lamartine, a few words from Béranger, *Calypso ne pouvait se consoler du départ d'Ulysse* (the first words of *Télémaque*) written by George Sand, Scribe's famous lines on the Umbrella, a sentence from Charles Nodier, an outline of distance by Jules Dupré, the signature of David d'Angers, and three notes written by Hector Berlioz. Monsieur de Clagny, during a visit to Paris, added a song by Lacenaire—a much coveted autograph, two lines from Fieschi, and an extremely short note from Napoleon, which were pasted on to pages of the album. Then Monsieur Gravier, in the course of a tour, had persuaded Mademoiselle Mars to write her name on this album, with Mademoiselle Georges, Taglioni, and Grisi, and some distinguished actors, such as Frédérick Lemaître, Monrose, Bouffé, Rubini, Lablache, Nourrit, and Arnal; for he knew a set of old fellows bought up in the seraglio, as they phrased it, who did him this favor.

This beginning of a collection was all the more precious to Dinah because she was the only person for ten leagues

round who owned an album. Within the last two years, however, several young ladies had acquired such books, in which they made their friends and acquaintances write more or less absurd quotations or sentiments. You who spend your lives in collecting autographs, simple and happy souls, like Dutch tulip fanciers, you will excuse Dinah when, in her fear of not keeping her guests more than two days, she begged Bianchon to enrich the volume she handed to him with a few lines of his writing.

The doctor made Lousteau smile by showing him this sentence on the first page:

"What makes the populace dangerous is that it has in its pocket an absolution for every crime.

"J. B. de Clagny."

"We will second the man who is brave enough to plead in favor of the Monarchy," Desplein's great pupil whispered to Lousteau, and he wrote below:

"The distinction between Napoleon and a water-carrier is evident only to Society; Nature takes no account of it. Thus Democracy, which resists inequality, constantly appeals to Nature. H. Bianchon."

"Ah!" cried Dinah, amazed, "you rich men take a gold piece out of your purse as poor men bring out a farthing. . . . I do not know," she went on, turning to Lousteau, "whether it is taking an unfair advantage of a guest to hope for a few lines——"

"Nay, madame, you flatter me. Bianchon is a great man, but I am too insignificant!—Twenty years hence my name will be more difficult to identify than that of the Public Prosecutor whose axiom, written in your album, will designate him as an obscurer Montesquieu. And I should want at least twenty-four hours to improvise some sufficiently bitter reflections, for I could only describe what I feel."

"I wish you needed a fortnight," said Madame de la Baudraye graciously, as she handed him the book. "I should keep you here all the longer."

At five next morning all the party in the Château d'Anzy were astir, little La Baudraye having arranged a day's sport for the Parisians—less for their pleasure than to gratify his own conceit. He was delighted to make them walk over the twelve hundred acres of waste land that he was intending to reclaim, an undertaking that would cost some hundred thousand francs, but which might yield an increase of thirty to sixty thousand francs a year in the returns of the estate of Anzy.

"Do you know why the Public Prosecutor has not come out with us?" asked Gatien Boirouge of Monsieur Gravier.

"Why, he told us that he was obliged to sit to-day; the minor cases are before the Court," replied the other.

"And did you believe that?" cried Gatien. "Well, my papa said to me, 'Monsieur Lebas will not join you early, for Monsieur de Clagny has begged him as his deputy to sit for him!' "

"Indeed!" said Gravier, changing countenance. "And Monsieur de la Baudraye is gone to La Charité!"

"But why do you meddle in such matters?" said Bianchon to Gatien.

"Horace is right," said Lousteau. "I cannot imagine why you trouble your heads so much about each other; you waste your time in frivolities."

Horace Bianchon looked at Étienne Lousteau, as much as to say that newspaper epigrams and the satire of the "funny column" were incomprehensible at Sancerre.

On reaching a copse, Monsieur Gravier left the two great men and Gatien, under the guidance of a keeper, to make their way through a little ravine.

"Well, we must wait for Monsieur Gravier," said Bianchon, when they had reached a clearing.

"You may be a great physician," said Gatien, "but you are

ignorant of provincial life. You mean to wait for Monsieur Gravier?—By this time he is running like a hare, in spite of his little round stomach; he is within twenty minutes of Anzy by now——" Gatien looked at his watch. "Good! he will be just in time."

"Where?"

"At the château for breakfast," replied Gatien. "Do you suppose I could rest easy if Madame de la Baudraye were alone with Monsieur de Clagny? There are two of them now; they will keep an eye on each other. Dinah will be well guarded."

"Ah, ha! Then Madame de la Baudraye has not yet made up her mind?" said Lousteau.

"So mamma thinks. For my part, I am afraid that Monsieur de Clagny has at last succeeded in bewitching Madame de la Baudraye. If he has been able to show her that he had any chance of putting on the robes of the Keeper of the Seals, he may have hidden his moleskin complexion, his terrible eyes, his touzled mane, his voice like a hoarse crier's, his bony figure, like that of a starveling poet, and have assumed all the charms of Adonis. If Dinah sees Monsieur de Clagny as Attorney-General, she may see him as a handsome youth. Eloquence has great privileges.—Besides, Madame de la Baudraye is full of ambition. She does not like Sancerre, and dreams of the glories of Paris."

"But what interest have you in all this?" said Lousteau. "If she is in love with the Public Prosecutor!—Ah! you think she will not love him for long, and you hope to succeed him."

"You who live in Paris," said Gatien, "meet as many different women as there are days in the year. But at Sancerre, where there are not half a dozen, and where, of those six, five set up for the most extravagant virtue, when the handsomest of them all keeps you at an infinite distance by looks as scornful as though she were of the blood royal, a young man of two-and-twenty may surely be allowed to make a guess at her secrets, since she must then treat him with some consideration."

"Consideration! So that is what you call it in these parts?" said the journalist with a smile.

"I should suppose Madame de la Baudraye to have too much good taste to trouble her head about that ugly ape," said Bianchon.

"Horace," said Lousteau, "look here, O learned interpreter of human nature, let us lay a trap for the Public Prosecutor; we shall be doing our friend Gatien a service, and get a laugh out of it. I do not love Public Prosecutors."

"You have a keen intuition of destiny," said Horace. "But what can we do?"

"Well, after dinner we will tell sundry little anecdotes of wives caught out by their husbands, killed, murdered under the most terrible circumstances.—Then we shall see the faces that Madame de la Baudraye and de Clagny will make."

"Not amiss!" said Bianchon; "one or the other must surely, by look or gesture——"

"I know a newspaper editor," Lousteau went on, addressing Gatien, "who, anxious to forefend a grievous fate, will take no stories but such as tell the tale of lovers burned, hewn, pounded, or cut to pieces; of wives boiled, fried, or baked; he takes them to his wife to read, hoping that sheer fear will keep her faithful—satisfied with that humble alternative, poor man! 'You see, my dear, to what the smallest error may lead you!' says he, epitomizing Arnolfe's address to Agnès."

"Madame de la Baudraye is quite guiltless; this youth sees double," said Bianchon. "Madame Piédefer seems to me far too pious to invite her daughter's lover to the Château d'Anzy. Madame de la Baudraye would have to hoodwink her mother, her husband, her maid, and her mother's maid; that is too much to do. I acquit her."

"With the more reason because her husband never 'quits her,'" said Gatien, laughing at his own wit.

"We can easily remember two or three stories that will make Dinah quake," said Lousteau. "Young man—and you too, Bianchon—let me beg you to maintain a stern demeanor; be thorough diplomatists, an easy manner without exaggeration, and watch the faces of the two criminals, you know,

without seeming to do so—out of the corner of your eye, or in a glass, on the sly. This morning we will hunt the hare, this evening we will hunt the Public Prosecutor."

The evening began with a triumph for Lousteau, who returned the album to the lady with this elegy written in it:

SPLEEN

You ask for verse from me, the feeble prey
Of this self-seeking world, a waif and stray
With none to whom to cling;
From me—unhappy, purblind, hopeless devil!
Who e'en in what is good see only evil
In any earthly thing!

This page, the pastime of a dame so fair,
May not reflect the shadow of my care,
For all things have their place.
Of love, to ladies bright, the poet sings,
Of joy, and balls, and dress, and dainty things—
Nay, or of God and Grace.

It were a bitter jest to bid the pen
Of one so worn with life, so hating men,
Depict a scene of joy.
Would you exult in sight to one born blind,
Or—cruel! of a mother's love remind
Some hapless orphan boy?

When cold despair has gripped a heart still fond,
When there is no young heart that will respond
To it in love, the future is a lie.
If there is none to weep when he is sad,
And share his woe, a man were better dead!—
And so I soon must die.

Give me your pity! often I blaspheme
The sacred name of God. Does it not seem
That I was born in vain?
Why should I bless Him? Or why thank Him, since
He might have made me handsome, rich, a prince—
And I am poor and plain?

ÉTIENNE LOUSTEAU.

September 1836, Château d'Auzy.

"And you have written those verses since yesterday?" cried Clagny in a suspicious tone.

"Dear me, yes, as I was following the game; it is only too evident? I would gladly have done something better for madame."

"The verses are exquisite!" cried Dinah, casting up her eyes to heaven.

"They are, alas! the expression of a too genuine feeling," replied Lousteau, in a tone of deep dejection.

The reader will, of course, have guessed that the journalist had stored these lines in his memory for ten years at least, for he had written them at the time of the Restoration in disgust at being unable to get on. Madame de la Baudraye gazed at him with such pity as the woes of genius inspire; and Monsieur de Clagny, who caught her expression, turned in hatred against this sham *Jeune Malade.** He sat down to backgammon with the curé of Sancerre. The Presiding Judge's son was so extremely obliging as to place a lamp near the two players in such a way as that the light fell full on Madame de la Baudraye, who took up her work; she was embroidering in coarse wool a wicker-plait paper-basket. The three conspirators sat close at hand.

"For whom are you decorating that pretty basket, madame?" said Lousteau. "For some charity lottery, perhaps?"

"No," she said, "I think there is too much display in charity done to the sound of a trumpet."

"You are very indiscreet," said Monsieur Gravier.

"Can there be any indiscretion," said Lousteau, "in inquiring who the happy mortal may be in whose room that basket is to stand?"

"There is no happy mortal in the case," said Dinah; "it is for Monsieur de la Baudraye."

The Public Prosecutor looked slily at Madame de la Baudraye and her work, as if he had said to himself, "I have lost my paper-basket!"

*The name of an Elegy written by Millevoye.

"Why, madame, may we not think him happy in having a lovely wife, happy in her decorating his paper-baskets so charmingly? The colors are red and black, like Robin Goodfellow. If ever I marry, I only hope that twelve years after, my wife's embroidered baskets may still be for me."

"And why should they not be for you?" said the lady, fixing her fine gray eyes, full of invitation, on Étienne's face.

"Parisians believe in nothing," said the lawyer bitterly. "The virtue of women is doubted above all things with terrible insolence. Yes, for some time past the books you have written, you Paris authors, your farces, your dramas, all your atrocious literature, turn on adultery——"

"Come, come, Monsieur the Public Prosecutor," retorted Étienne, laughing, "I left you to play your game in peace, I did not attack you, and here you are bringing an indictment against me. On my honor as a journalist, I have launched above a hundred articles against the writers you speak of; but I confess that in attacking them it was to attempt something like criticism. Be just; if you condemn them, you must condemn Homer, whose *Iliad* turns on Helen of Troy; you must condemn Milton's *Paradise Lost.* Eve and her serpent seem to me a pretty little case of symbolical adultery; you must suppress the Psalms of David, inspired by the highly adulterous love affairs of that Louis XIV. of Judah; you must make a bonfire of *Mithridate, le Tartuffe, l'École des Femmes, Phèdre, Andromaque, le Mariage de Figaro,* Dante's *Inferno,* Petrarch's Sonnets, all the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the romances of the Middle Ages, the History of France and of Rome, etc., etc. Excepting Bossuet's *Histoire des Variations* and Pascal's *Provinciales,* I do not think there are many books left to read if you insist on eliminating all those in which illicit love is mentioned."

"Much loss that would be!" said Monsieur de Clagny.

Étienne, nettled by the superior air assumed by Monsieur de Clagny, wanted to infuriate him by one of those cold-drawn jests which consist in defending an opinion in which we have no belief, simply to rouse the wrath of a poor man who argues in good faith; a regular journalist's pleasantry.

"If we take up the political attitude into which you would force yourself," he went on, without heeding the lawyer's remark, "and assume the part of Public Prosecutor of all the ages—for every Government has its public ministry—well, the Catholic religion is infected at its fountain-head by a startling instance of illegal union. In the opinion of King Herod, and of Pilate as representing the Roman Empire, Joseph's wife figured as an adulteress, since, by her own avowal, Joseph was not the father of Jesus. The heathen judge could no more recognize the Immaculate Conception than you yourself would admit the possibility of such a miracle if a new religion should nowadays be preached as based on a similar mystery. Do you suppose that a judge and jury in a police court would give credence to the operation of the Holy Ghost! And yet who can venture to assert that God will never again redeem mankind? Is it any better now than it was under Tiberius?"

"Your argument is blasphemy," said Monsieur de Clagny.

"I grant it," said the journalist, "but not with malicious intent. You cannot suppress historical fact. In my opinion, Pilate, when he sentenced Jesus, and Anytus—who spoke for the aristocratic party at Athens—when he insisted on the death of Socrates, both represented established social interests which held themselves legitimate, invested with co-operative powers, and obliged to defend themselves. Pilate and Anytus in their time were not less logical than the public prosecutors who demanded the heads of the sergeants of La Rochelle; who, at this day, are guillotining the republicans who take up arms against the throne as established by the revolution of July, and the innovators who aim at upsetting society for their own advantage under pretence of organizing it on a better footing. In the eyes of the great families of Greece and Rome, Socrates and Jesus were criminals; to those ancient aristocracies their opinions were akin to those of the Mountain; and if their followers had been victorious, they would have produced a little 'ninety-three' in the Roman Empire or in Attica."

"What are you trying to come to, monsieur?" asked the lawyer.

"To adultery!—For thus, monsieur, a Buddhist as he smokes his pipe may very well assert that the Christian religion is founded in adultery; as we believe that Mahomet is an impostor; that his Koran is an epitome of the Old Testament and the Gospels; and that God never had the least intention of constituting that camel-driver His Prophet."

"If there were many men like you in France—and there are more than enough, unfortunately—all government would be impossible."

"And there would be no religion at all," said Madame Piédefer, who had been making strangely wry faces all through this discussion.

"You are paining them very much," said Bianchon to Lousteau in an undertone. "Do not talk of religion; you are saying things that are enough to upset them."

"If I were a writer or a romancer," said Monsieur Gravier, "I should take the side of the luckless husbands. I, who have seen many things, and strange things too, know that among the ranks of deceived husbands there are some whose attitude is not devoid of energy, men who, at a crisis, can be very dramatic, to use one of your words, monsieur," he said, addressing Étienne.

"You are very right, my dear Monsieur Gravier," said Lousteau. "I never thought that deceived husbands were ridiculous; on the contrary, I think highly of them——"

"Do you not think a husband's confidence a sublime thing?" said Bianchon. "He believes in his wife, he does not suspect her, he trusts her implicitly. But if he is so weak as to trust her, you make game of him; if he is jealous and suspicious, you hate him; what, then, I ask you, is the happy medium for a man of spirit?"

"If Monsieur de Clagny had not just expressed such vehement disapproval of the immorality of stories in which the matrimonial compact is violated, I could tell you of a husband's revenge," said Lousteau.

Monsieur de Clagny threw the dice with a convulsive jerk, and dared not look up at the journalist.

"A story, from you!" cried Madame de la Baudraye. "I should hardly have dared to hope for such a treat——"

"It is not my story, madame; I am not clever enough to invent such a tragedy. It was told me—and how delightfully! —by one of our greatest writers, the finest literary musician of our day, Charles Nodier."

"Well, tell it," said Dinah. "I never met Monsieur Nodier, so you have no comparison to fear."

"Not long after the 18th Brumaire," Étienne began, "there was, as you know, a call to arms in Brittany and la Vendée. The First Consul, anxious before all things for peace in France, opened negotiations with the rebel chiefs, and took energetic military measures; but, while combining his plans of campaign with the insinuating charm of Italian diplomacy, he also set the Machiavelian springs of the police in movement, Fouché then being at its head. And none of these means were superfluous to stifle the fire of war then blazing in the West.

"At this time a young man of the Maillé family was despatched by the Chouans from Brittany to Saumur, to open communications between certain magnates of that town and its environs and the leaders of the Royalist party. The envoy was, in fact, arrested on the very day he landed—for he traveled by boat, disguised as a master mariner. However, as a man of practical intelligence, he had calculated all the risks of the undertaking; his passport and papers were all in order, and the men told off to take him were afraid of blundering.

"The Chevalier de Beauvoir—I now remember his name—had studied his part well; he appealed to the family whose name he had borrowed, persisted in his false address, and stood his examination so boldly that he would have been set at large but for the blind belief that the spies had in their instructions, which were unfortunately only too minute. In this dilemma the authorities were more ready to risk an arbitrary act than to let a man escape to whose capture the Minister attached great importance. In those days of liberty the agents of the powers in authority cared little enough for what

we now regard as *legal*. The Chevalier was therefore imprisoned provisionally, until the superior officials should come to some decision as to his identity. He had not long to wait for it; orders were given to guard the prisoner closely in spite of his denials.

"The Chevalier de Beauvoir was next transferred, in obedience to further orders, to the Castle of l'Escarpe, a name which sufficiently indicates its situation. This fortress, perched on very high rocks, has precipices for its trenches; it is reached on all sides by steep and dangerous paths; and, like every ancient castle, its principal gate has a drawbridge over a wide moat. The commandant of this prison, delighted to have charge of a man of family whose manners were most agreeable, who expressed himself well, and seemed highly educated, received the Chevalier as a godsend; he offered him the freedom of the place on parole, that they might together the better defy its dulness. The prisoner was more than content.

"Beauvoir was a loyal gentleman, but, unfortunately, he was also a very handsome youth. He had attractive features, a dashing air, a pleasing address, and extraordinary strength. Well made, active, full of enterprise, and loving danger, he would have made an admirable leader of guerillas, and was the very man for the part. The commandant gave his prisoner the most comfortable room, entertained him at his table, and at first had nothing but praise for the Vendéen. This officer was a Corsican and married; his wife was pretty and charming, and he thought her, perhaps, not to be trusted—at any rate, he was as jealous as a Corsican and a rather ill-looking soldier may be. The lady took a fancy to Beauvoir, and he found her very much to his taste; perhaps they loved! Love in a prison is quick work. Did they commit some imprudence? Was the sentiment they entertained something warmer than the superficial gallantry which isalmost a duty of men towards women?

"Beauvoir never fully explained this rather obscure episode of the story; it is at least certain that the commandant thought himself justified in treating his prisoner with excessive severity. Beauvoir was placed in the dungeon, fed on

black bread and cold water, and fettered in accordance with the time-honored traditions of the treatment lavished on captives. His cell, under the fortress-yard, was vaulted with hard stone, the walls were of desperate thickness; the tower overlooked the precipice.

"When the luckless man had convinced himself of the impossibility of escape, he fell into those day-dreams which are at once the comfort and the crowning despair of prisoners. He gave himself up to the trifles which in such cases seem so important; he counted the hours and the days; he studied the melancholy trade of being prisoner; he became absorbed in himself, and learned the value of air and sunshine; then, at the end of a fortnight, he was attacked by that terrible malady, that fever for liberty, which drives prisoners to those heroic efforts of which the prodigious achievements seem to us impossible, though true, and which my friend the doctor" (and he turned to Bianchon) "would perhaps ascribe to some unknown forces too recondite for his physiological analysis to detect, some mysteries of the human will of which the obscurity baffles science."

Bianchon shook his head in negation.

"Beauvoir was eating his heart out, for death alone could set him free. One morning the turnkey, whose duty it was to bring him his food, instead of leaving him when he had given him his meagre pittance, stood with his arms folded, looking at him with strange meaning. Conversation between them was generally brief, and the warder never began it. The Chevalier was therefore greatly surprised when the man said to him: 'Of course, monsieur, you know your own business when you insist on being always called Monsieur Lebrun, or citizen Lebrun. It is no concern of mine; ascertaining your name is no part of my duty. It is all the same to me whether you call yourself Peter or Paul. If every man minds his own business, the cows will not stray. At the same time, *I* know,' said he, with a wink, 'that you are Monsieur Charles-Félix-Théodore, Chevalier de Beauvoir, and cousin to Madame la Duchesse de Maillé.—Heh?' he added after a short silence, during which he looked at his prisoner.

"Beauvoir, seeing that he was safe under lock and key, did not imagine that his position could be any the worse if his real name were known.

"'Well, and supposing I were the Chevalier de Beauvoir, what should I gain by that?' said he.

"'Oh, there is everything to be gained by it,' replied the jailer in an undertone. 'I have been paid to help you to get away; but wait a minute! If I were suspected in the smallest degree, I should be shot out of hand. So I have said that I will do no more in the matter than will just earn the money.—Look here,' said he, taking a small file out of his pocket, 'this is your key; with this you can cut through one of your bars. By the Mass, but it will not be an easy job,' he went on, glancing at the narrow loophole that let daylight into the dungeon.

"It was in a splayed recess under the deep cornice that ran round the top of the tower, between the brackets that supported the embrasures.

"'Monsieur,' said the man, 'you must take care to saw through the iron low enough to get your body through.'

"'I will get through, never fear,' said the prisoner.

"'But high enough to leave a stanchion to fasten a cord to,' the warder went on.

"'And where is the cord?' asked Beauvoir.

"'Here,' said the man, throwing down a knotted rope. 'It is made of raveled linen, that you may be supposed to have contrived it yourself, and it is long enough. When you have got to the bottom knot, let yourself drop gently, and the rest you must manage for yourself. You will probably find a carriage somewhere in the neighborhood, and friends looking out for you. But I know nothing about that.—I need not remind you that there is a man-at-arms to the right of the tower. You will take care, of course, to choose a dark night, and wait till the sentinel is asleep. You must take your chance of being shot; but——'

"'All right! All right! At least I shall not rot here,' cried the young man.

"'Well, that may happen nevertheless," replied the jailer, with a stupid expression.

"Beauvoir thought this was merely one of the aimless remarks that such folks indulge in. The hope of freedom filled him with such joy that he could not be troubled to consider the words of a man who was no more than a better sort of peasant. He set to work at once, and had filed the bars through in the course of the day. Fearing a visit from the Governor, he stopped up the breaches with bread crumb rubbed in rust to make it look like the iron; he hid his rope, and waited for a favorable night with the intensity of anticipation, the deep anguish of soul that makes a prisoner's life dramatic.

"At last, one murky night, an autumn night, he finished cutting through the bars, tied the cord firmly to the stump, and perched himself on the sill outside, holding on by one hand to the piece of iron remaining. Then he waited for the darkest hour of the night, when the sentinels would probably be asleep; this would be not long before dawn. He knew the hours of their rounds, the length of each watch, every detail with which prisoners, almost involuntarily, become familiar. He waited till the moment when one of the men-at-arms had spent two-thirds of his watch and gone into his box for shelter from the fog. Then, feeling sure that the chances were at the best for his escape, he let himself down knot by knot, hanging between earth and sky, and clinging to his rope with the strength of a giant. All was well. At the last knot but one, just as he was about to let himself drop, a prudent impulse led him to feel for the ground with his feet, and he found no footing. The predicament was awkward for a man bathed in sweat, tired, and perplexed, and in a position where his life was at stake on even chances. He was about to risk it, when a trivial incident stopped him; his hat fell off; happily, he listened for the noise it must make in striking the ground, and he heard not a sound.

"The prisoner felt vaguely suspicious as to this state of affairs. He began to wonder whether the Commandant had not laid a trap for him—but if so, why? Torn by doubts, he almost resolved to postpone the attempt till another night. At any rate, he would wait for the first gleam of day, when it

would still not be impossible to escape. His great strength enabled him to climb up again to his window; still, he was almost exhausted by the time he gained the sill, where he crouched on the lookout, exactly like a cat on the parapet of a gutter. Before long, by the pale light of dawn, he perceived as he waved the rope that there was a little interval of a hundred feet between the lowest knot and the pointed rocks below.

" 'Thank you, my friend the Governor!' said he, with characteristic coolness. Then, after a brief meditation on this skilfully-planned revenge, he thought it wise to return to his cell.

"He laid his outer clothes conspicuously on the bed, left the rope outside to make it seem that he had fallen, and hid himself behind the door to await the arrival of the treacherous turnkey, arming himself with one of the iron bars he had filed out. The jailer, who returned rather earlier than usual to secure the dead man's leavings, opened the door, whistling as he came in; but when he was at arm's length, Beauvoir hit him such a tremendous blow on the head that the wretch fell in a heap without a cry; the bar had cracked his skull.

"The Chevalier hastily stripped him and put on his clothes, mimicked his walk, and, thanks to the early hour and the undoubting confidence of the warders of the great gate, he walked out and away."

It did not seem to strike either the lawyer or Madame de la Baudraye that there was in this narrative the least allusion that should apply to them. Those in the little plot looked inquiringly at each other, evidently surprised at the perfect coolness of the two supposed lovers.

"Oh! I can tell you a better story than that," said Bianchon.

"Let us hear," said the audience, at a sign from Lousteau, conveying that Bianchon had a reputation as a story-teller.

Among the stock of narratives he had in store, for every clever man has a fund of anecdotes as Madame de la Baudraye had a collection of phrases, the doctor chose that which is known as *La Grande Bretêche,* and is so famous indeed, that

it was put on the stage at the *Gymnase-Dramatique* under the title of *Valentine.* So it is not necessary to repeat it here, though it was then new to the inhabitants of the Château d'Anzy. And it was told with the same finish of gesture and tone which had won such praise for Bianchon when at Mademoiselle des Touches' supper-party he had told it for the first time. The final picture of the Spanish grandee, starved to death where he stood in the cupboard walled up by Madame de Merret's husband, and that husband's last word as he replied to his wife's entreaty, "You swore on that crucifix that there was no one in the closet!" produced their full effect. There was a silent minute, highly flattering to Bianchon.

"Do you know, gentlemen," said Madame de la Baudraye, "love must be a mighty thing that it can tempt a woman to put herself in such a position?"

"I, who have certainly seen some strange things in the course of my life," said Gravier, "was cognizant in Spain of an adventure of the same kind."

"You come forward after two great performers," said Madame de la Baudraye, with coquettish flattery, as she glanced at the two Parisians. "But never mind—proceed."

"Some little time after his entry into Madrid," said the Receiver-General, "the Grand Duke of Berg invited the magnates of the capital to an entertainment given to the newly conquered city by the French army. In spite of the splendor of the affair, the Spaniards were not very cheerful; their ladies hardly danced at all, and most of the company sat down to cards. The gardens of the Duke's palace were so brilliantly illuminated, that the ladies could walk about in as perfect safety as in broad daylight. The fête was of imperial magnificence. Nothing was grudged to give the Spaniards a high idea of the Emperor, if they were to measure him by the standard of his officers.

"In an arbor near the house, between one and two in the morning, a party of French officers were discussing the chances of war, and the not too hopeful outlook prognosticated by the conduct of the Spaniards present at that grand ball.

" 'I can only tell you,' said the surgeon-major of the company of which I was paymaster, 'I applied formally to Prince Murat only yesterday to be recalled. Without being afraid exactly of leaving my bones in the Peninsula, I would rather dress the wounds made by our worthy neighbors the Germans. Their weapons do not run quite so deep into the body as these Castilian daggers. Besides, a certain dread of Spain is, with me, a sort of superstition. From my earliest youth I have read Spanish books, and a heap of gloomy romances and tales of adventures in this country have given me a serious prejudice against its manners and customs.

" 'Well, now, since my arrival in Madrid, I have already been, not indeed the hero, but the accomplice of a dangerous intrigue, as dark and mysterious as any romance by Lady [Mrs.] Radcliffe. I am apt to attend to my presentiments, and I am off to-morrow. Murat will not refuse me leave, for, thanks to our varied services, we always have influential friends.'

" 'Since you mean to cut your stick, tell us what's up,' said an old Republican colonel, who cared not a rap for Imperial gentility and choice language.

"The surgeon-major looked about him cautiously, as if to make sure who were his audience, and being satisfied that no Spaniard was within hearing, he said:

" 'We are none but Frenchmen—then, with pleasure, Colonel Hulot. About six days since, I was quietly going home, at about eleven at night, after leaving General Montcornet, whose hotel is but a few yards from mine. We had come away together from the Quartermaster-General's, where we had played rather high at *bouillotte*. Suddenly, at the corner of a narrow side-street, two strangers, or rather, two demons, rushed upon me and flung a large cloak round my head and arms. I yelled out, as you may suppose, like a dog that is thrashed, but the cloth smothered my voice, and I was lifted into a chaise with dexterous rapidity. When my two companions released me from the cloak, I heard these dreadful words spoken by a woman, in bad French:

" ' "If you cry out, or if you attempt to escape, if you make the very least suspicious demonstration, the gentleman opposite to you will stab you without hesitation. So you had better keep quiet.—Now, I will tell you why you have been carried off. If you will take the trouble to put your hand out in this direction, you will find your case of instruments lying between us; we sent a messenger for them to your rooms, in your name. You will need them. We are taking you to a house that you may save the honor of a lady who is about to give birth to a child that she wishes to place in this gentleman's keeping without her husband's knowledge. Though monsieur rarely leaves his wife, with whom he is still passionately in love, watching over her with all the vigilance of Spanish jealousy, she has succeeded in concealing her condition; he believes her to be ill. You must bring the child into the world. The dangers of this enterprise do not concern us: only, you must obey us, otherwise the lover, who is sitting opposite to you in this carriage, and who does not understand a word of French, will kill you on the least rash movement."

" ' "And who are you?" I asked, feeling for the speaker's hand, for her arm was inside the sleeve of a soldier's uniform.

" ' "I am my lady's waiting-woman," said she, "and ready to reward you with my own person if you show yourself gallant and helpful in our necessities."

" ' "Gladly," said I, seeing that I was inevitably started on a perilous adventure.

" 'Under favor of the darkness, I felt whether the person and figure of the girl were in keeping with the idea I had formed of her from her tone of voice. The good soul had, no doubt, made up her mind from the first to accept all the chances of this strange act of kidnapping, for she kept silence very obligingly, and the coach had not been more than ten minutes on the way when she accepted and returned a very satisfactory kiss. The lover, who sat opposite to me, took no offence at an occasional quite involuntary kick; as he did not understand French, I conclude he paid no heed to them.

" ' "I can be your mistress on one condition only," said the

woman, in reply to the nonsense I poured into her ear, carried away by the fervor of an improvised passion, to which everything was unpropitious.

" ' "And what is it?"

" ' "That you will never attempt to find out, whose servant I am. If I am to go to you, it must be at night, and you must receive me in the dark."

" ' "Very good," said I.

" 'We had got as far as this, when the carriage drew up under a garden wall.

" ' "You must allow me to bandage your eyes," said the maid. "You can lean on my arm, and I will lead you."

" 'She tied a handkerchief over my eyes, fastening it in a tight knot at the back of my head. I heard the sound of a key being cautiously fitted to the lock of a little side door by the speechless lover who had sat opposite to me. In a moment the waiting-woman, whose shape was slender, and who walked with an elegant jauntiness'—*meneho,* as they call it," Monsieur Gravier explained in a superior tone, "a word which describes the swing which women contrive to give a certain part of their dress that shall be nameless.—'The waiting-woman'—it is the surgeon-major who is speaking," the narrator went on —" 'led me along the gravel walks of a large garden, till at a certain spot she stopped. From the louder sound of our footsteps, I concluded that we were close to the house. "Now silence!" said she is a whisper, "and mind what you are about. Do not overlook one of my signals; I cannot speak without terrible danger for both of us, and at this moment your life is of the first importance." Then she added: "My mistress is in a room on the ground floor. To get into it we must pass through her husband's room and close to his bed. Do not cough, walk softly, and follow me closely, so as not to knock against the furniture or tread anywhere but on the carpets I laid down."

" 'Here the lover gave an impatient growl, as a man annoyed by so much delay.

" 'The woman said no more, I heard a door open, I felt the warm air of the house, and we stole in like thieves. Pres-

ently the girl's light hand removed the bandage. I found myself in a lofty and spacious room, badly lighted by a smoky lamp. The window was open, but the jealous husband had fitted it with iron bars. I was in the bottom of a sack, as it were.

"'On the ground a woman was lying on a mat; her head was covered with a muslin veil, but I could see her eyes through it full of tears and flashing with the brightness of stars; she held a handkerchief in her mouth, biting it so hard that her teeth were set in it: I never saw finer limbs, but her body was writhing with pain like a harp-string thrown on the fire. The poor creature had made a sort of struts of her legs by setting her feet against a chest of drawers, and with both hands she held on to the bar of a chair, her arms outstretched, with every vein painfully swelled. She might have been a criminal undergoing torture. But she did not utter a cry; there was not a sound but the dull cracking of her joints. There we stood, all three speechless and motionless. The husband snored with reassuring regularity. I wanted to study the waiting-woman's face, but she had put on a mask, which she had removed, no doubt, during our drive, and I could see nothing but a pair of black eyes and a pleasingly rounded figure.

"'The lover threw some towels over his mistress' legs and folded the muslin veil double over her face. As soon as I had examined the lady with care, I perceived from certain symptoms which I had noted once before on a very sad occasion in my life, that the infant was dead. I turned to the maid in order to tell her this. Instantly the suspicious stranger drew his dagger; but I had time to explain the matter to the woman, who explained in a word or two to him in a low voice. On hearing my opinion, a quick, slight shudder ran through him from head to foot like a lightning flash; I fancied I could see him turn pale under his black velvet mask.

"'The waiting-woman took advantage of a moment when he was bending in despair over the dying woman, who had turned blue, to point to some glasses of lemonade standing on

a table, at the same time shaking her head negatively. I understood that I was not to drink anything in spite of the dreadful thirst that parched my throat. The lover was thirsty too; he took an empty glass, poured out some fresh lemonade, and drank it off.

"'At this moment the lady had a violent attack of pain, which showed me that now was the time to operate. I summoned all my courage, and in about an hour had succeeded in delivering her of the child, cutting it up to extract it. The Spaniard no longer thought of poisoning me, understanding that I had saved the mother's life. Large tears fell on his cloak. The woman uttered no sound, but she trembled like a hunted animal, and was bathed in sweat.

"'At one horribly critical moment she pointed in the direction of her husband's room; he had turned in his sleep, and she alone had heard the rustle of the sheets, the creaking of the bed or of the curtain. We all paused, and the lover and the waiting-woman, through the eyeholes of their masks, gave each other a look that said, "If he wakes, shall we kill him?"

"'At that instant I put out my hand to take the glass of lemonade the Spaniard had drunk part of. He, thinking that I was about to take one of the full glasses, sprang forward like a cat, and laid his long dagger over the two poisoned goblets, leaving me his own, and signing to me to drink what was left. So much was conveyed by this quick action, and it was so full of good feeling, that I forgave him his atrocious schemes for killing me, and thus burying every trace of this event.

"'After two hours of care and alarms, the maid and I put her mistress to bed. The lover, forced into so perilous an adventure, had, to provide means in case of having to fly, a packet of diamonds stuck to paper; these he put into my pocket without my knowing it; and I may add parenthetically, that as I was ignorant of the Spaniard's magnificent gift, my servant stole the jewels the day after, and went off with a perfect fortune.

"'I whispered my instructions to the waiting-woman as to the further care of her patient, and wanted to be gone. The

maid remained with her mistress, which was not very reassuring, but I was on my guard. The lover made a bundle of the dead infant and the blood-stained clothes, tying it up tightly, and hiding it under his cloak; he passed his hand over my eyes as if to bid me to see nothing, and signed to me to take hold of the skirt of his coat. He went first out of the room, and I followed, not without a parting glance at my lady of an hour. She, seeing the Spaniard had gone out, snatched off her mask and showed me an exquisite face.

"'When I found myself in the garden, in the open air, I confess that I breathed as if a heavy load had been lifted from my breast. I followed my guide at a respectful distance, watching his least movement with keen attention. Having reached the little door, he took my hand and pressed a seal to my lips, set in a ring which I had seen him wearing on a finger of his left hand, and I gave him to understand that this significant sign would be obeyed. In the street two horses were waiting; we each mounted one. My Spaniard took my bridle, held his own between his teeth, for his right hand held the bloodstained bundle, and we went off at lightning speed.

"'I could not see the smallest object by which to retrace the road we came by. At dawn I found myself close by my own door, and the Spaniard fled towards the Atocha gate.'

"'And you saw nothing which could lead you to suspect who the woman was whom you had attended?' the Colonel asked of the surgeon.

"'One thing only,' he replied. 'When I turned the unknown lady over, I happened to remark a mole on her arm, about half-way down, as big as a lentil, and surrounded with brown hairs.'—At this instant the rash speaker turned pale. All our eyes, that had been fixed on his, followed his glance, and we saw a Spaniard, whose glittering eyes shone through a clump of orange-trees. On finding himself the object of our attention, the man vanished with the swiftness of a sylph. A young captain rushed in pursuit.

"'By Heaven!' cried the surgeon, 'that basilisk stare has chilled me through, my friends. I can hear bells ringing in my ears! I may take leave of you; you will bury me here!'

"'What a fool you are!' exclaimed Colonel Hulot. 'Falcon is on the track of the Spaniard who was listening, and he will call him to account.'

"'Well,' cried one and another, seeing the captain return quite out of breath.

"'The devil's in it,' said Falcon; 'the man went through a wall, I believe! As I do not suppose that he is a wizard, I fancy he must belong to the house! He knows every corner and turning, and easily escaped.'

"'I am done for,' said the surgeon, in a gloomy voice.

"'Come, come, keep calm, Béga,' said I (his name was Béga), 'we will sit on watch with you till you leave. We will not leave you this evening.'

"In point of fact, three young officers who had been losing at play went home with the surgeon to his lodgings, and one of us offered to stay with him.

"Within two days Béga had obtained his recall to France; he made arrangements to travel with a lady to whom Murat had given a strong escort, and had just finished dinner with a party of friends, when his servant came to say that a young lady wished to speak to him. The surgeon and the three officers went down suspecting mischief. The stranger could only say, 'Be on your guard——' when she dropped down dead. It was the waiting-woman, who, finding she had been poisoned, had hoped to arrive in time to warn her lover.

"'Devil take it!' cried Captain Falcon, 'that is what I call love! No woman on earth but a Spaniard can run about with a dose of poison in her inside!'

"Béga remained strangely pensive. To drown the dark presentiments that haunted him, he sat down to table again, and with his companions drank immoderately. The whole party went early to bed, half drunk.

"In the middle of the night the hapless Béga was aroused by the sharp rattle of the curtain rings pulled violently along the rods. He sat up in bed, in the mechanical trepidation which we all feel on waking with such a start. He saw standing before him a Spaniard wrapped in a cloak, who fixed on

him the same burning gaze that he had seen through the bushes.

"Béga shouted out, 'Help, help, come at once, friends!' But the Spaniard answered his cry of distress with a bitter laugh.—'Opium grows for all!' said he.

"Having thus pronounced sentence as it were, the stranger pointed to the three other men sleeping soundly, took from under his cloak the arm of a woman, freshly amputated, and held it out to Béga, pointing to a mole like that he had so rashly described. 'Is it the same?' he asked. By the light of the lantern the man had set on the bed, Béga recognized the arm, and his speechless amazement was answer enough.

"Without waiting for further information, the lady's husband stabbed him to the heart."

"You must tell that to the marines!" said Lousteau. "It needs their robust faith to swallow it! Can you tell me which told the tale, the dead man or the Spaniard?"

"Monsieur," replied the Receiver-General, "I nursed poor Béga, who died five days after in dreadful suffering.—That is not the end.

"At the time of the expedition sent out to restore Ferdinand VII. I was appointed to a place in Spain; but, happily for me, I had got no further than Tours when I was promised the post of Receiver here at Sancerre. On the eve of setting out I was at a ball at Madame de Listomère's, where we were to meet several Spaniards of high rank. On rising from the card-table, I saw a Spanish grandee, an *afrancesado* in exile, who had been about a fortnight in Touraine. He had arrived very late at this ball—his first appearance in society—accompanied by his wife, whose right arm was perfectly motionless. Everybody made way in silence for this couple, whom we all watched with some excitement. Imagine a picture by Murillo come to life. Under black and hollow brows the man's eyes were like a fixed blaze; his face looked dried up, his bald skull was red, and his frame was a terror to behold, he was so emaciated. His wife—no, you cannot imagine her. Her figure had the supple swing for which the Spaniards created the

word *menelo;* though pale, she was still beautiful; her complexion was dazzlingly fair—a rare thing in a Spaniard; and her gaze, full of the Spanish sun, fell on you like a stream of melted lead.

"'Madame,' said I to her, towards the end of the evening, 'what occurrence led to the loss of your arm?'

"'I lost it in the war of independence,' said she."

"Spain is a strange country," said Madame de la Baudraye. "It still shows traces of Arab manners."

"Oh!" said the journalist, laughing, "the mania for cutting off arms is an old one there. It turns up again every now and then like some of our newspaper hoaxes, for the subject has given plots for plays on the Spanish stage so early as 1570——"

"Then do you think me capable of inventing such a story?" said Monsieur Gravier, nettled by Lousteau's impertinent tone.

"Quite incapable of such a thing," said the journalist with grave irony.

"Pooh!" said Bianchon, "the inventions of romances and play-writers are quite as often transferred from their books and pieces into real life, as the events of real life are made use of on the stage or adapted to a tale. I have seen the comedy of *Tartufe* played out—with the exception of the close; Orgon's eyes could not be opened to the truth."

"And the tragi-comedy of *Adolphe* by Benjamin Constant is constantly enacted," cried Lousteau.

"And do you suppose," asked Madame de la Baudraye, "that such adventures as Monsieur Gravier has related could ever occur now, and in France?"

"Dear me!" cried Clagny, "of the ten or twelve startling crimes that are annually committed in France, quite half are mixed up with circumstances at least as extraordinary as these, and often outdoing them in romantic details. Indeed, is not this proved by the reports in the *Gazette des Tribunaux* —the Police news—in my opinion, one of the worst abuses of the Press? This newspaper, which was started only in 1826

of '27, was not in existence when I began my professional career, and the facts of the crime I am about to speak of were not known beyond the limits of the department where it was committed.

"In the quarter of Saint-Pierre-des-Corps at Tours a woman whose husband had disappeared at the time when the army of the Loire was disbanded, and who had mourned him deeply, was conspicuous for her excess of devotion. When the mission priests went through all the provinces to restore the crosses that had been destroyed and to efface the traces of revolutionary impiety, this widow was one of their most zealous proselytes, she carried a cross and nailed to it a silver heart pierced by an arrow; and, for a long time after she went every evening to pray at the foot of the cross which was erected behind the Cathedral apse.

"At last, overwhelmed by remorse, she confessed to a horrible crime. She had killed her husband, as Fualdès was murdered, by bleeding him; she had salted the body and packed it in pieces into old casks, exactly as if it had been pork; and for a long time she had taken a piece every morning and thrown it into the Loire. Her confessor consulted his superiors, and told her that it would be his duty to inform the public prosecutor. The woman awaited the action of the Law. The public prosecutor and the examining judge, on examining the cellar, found the husband's head still in pickle in one of the casks.—'Wretched woman,' said the judge to the accused, 'since you were so barbarous as to throw your husband's body piecemeal into the river, why did you not get rid of the head? Then there would have been no proof.'

" 'I often tried, monsieur,' said she, 'but it was too heavy,' "

"Well, and what became of the woman?" asked the two Parisians.

"She was sentenced and executed at Tours," replied the lawyer; "but her repentance and piety had attracted interest in spite of her monstrous crime."

"And do you suppose," said Bianchon, "that we know all the tragedies that are played out behind the curtain of private

life that the public never lifts?—It seems to me that human justice is ill adapted to judge of crimes as between husband and wife. It has every right to intervene as the police; but in equity it knows nothing of the heart of the matter."

"The victim has in many cases been for so long the tormentor," said Madame de la Baudraye guilelessly, "that the crime would sometimes seem almost excusable if the accused could tell all."

This reply, led up to by Bianchon and by the story which Clagny had told, left the two Parisians excessively puzzled as to Dinah's position.

At bedtime council was held, one of those discussions which take place in the passages of old country-houses where the bachelors linger, candle in hand, for mysterious conversations.

Monsieur Gravier was now informed of the object in view during this entertaining evening which had brought Madame de la Baudraye's innocence to light.

"But, after all," said Lousteau, "our hostess' serenity may indicate deep depravity instead of the most child-like innocence. The Public Prosecutor looks to me quite capable of suggesting that little La Baudraye should be put in pickle——"

"He is not to return till to-morrow; who knows what may happen in the course of the night?" said Gatien.

"We will know!" cried Monsieur Gravier.

In the life of a country house a number of practical jokes are considered admissible, some of them odiously treacherous. Monsieur Gravier, who had seen so much of the world, proposed setting seals on the doors of Madame de la Baudraye and of the Public Prosecutor. The ducks that denounced the poet Ibycus are as nothing in comparison with the single hair that these country spies fasten across the opening of a door by means of two little flattened pills of wax, fixed so high up, or so low down, that the trick is never suspected. If the gallant comes out of his own door and opens the other, the broken hair tells the tale.

When everybody was supposed to be asleep, the doctor, the journalist, the receiver of taxes, and Gatien came barefoot, like robbers, and silently fastened up the two doors, agreeing to come again at five in the morning to examine the state of the fastenings. Imagine their astonishment and Gatien's delight when all four, candle in hand, and with hardly any clothes on, came to look at the hairs, and found the min perfect preservation on both doors.

"Is it the same wax?" asked Monsieur Gravier.

"Are they the same hairs?" asked Lousteau.

"Yes," replied Gatien.

"This quite alters the matter!" cried Lousteau. "You have been beating the bush for a will-o'-the wisp."

Monsieur Gravier and Gatien exchanged questioning glances which were meant to convey, "Is there not something offensive to us in that speech? Ought we to laugh or to be angry?"

"If Dinah is virtuous," said the journalist in a whisper to Bianchon, "she is worth an effort on my part to pluck the fruit of her first love."

The idea of carrying by storm a fortress that had for nine years stood out against the besiegers of Sancerre smiled on Lousteau.

With this notion in his head, he was the first to go down and into the garden, hoping to meet his hostess. And this chance fell out all the more easily because Madame de la Baudraye on her part wished to converse with her critic. Half such chances are planned.

"You were out shooting yesterday, monsieur," said Madame de la Baudraye. "This morning I am rather puzzled as to how to find you any new amusement; unless you would like to come to La Baudraye, where you may study more of our provincial life than you can see here, for you have made but one mouthful of my absurdities. However, the saying about the handsomest girl in the world is not less true of the poor provincial woman!"

"That little simpleton Gatien has, I suppose, repeated to you a speech I made simply to make him confess that he

adored you," said Étienne. "Your silence, during dinner the day before yesterday and throughout the evening, was enough to betray one of those indiscretions which we never commit in Paris.—What can I say? I do not flatter myself that you will understand me. In fact, I laid a plot for the telling of all those stories yesterday solely to see whether I could rouse you and Monsieur de Clagny to a pang of remorse.—Oh! be quite easy; your innocence is fully proved.

"If you had the slightest fancy for that estimable magistrate, you would have lost all your value in my eyes.—I love perfection.

"You do not, you cannot love that cold, dried-up, taciturn little usurer on wine casks and land, who would leave any man in the lurch for twenty-five centimes on a renewal. Oh, I have fully recognized Monsieur de la Baudraye's similarity to a Parisian bill-discounter; their nature is identical.—At eight-and-twenty, handsome, well conducted, and childless—I assure you, madame, I never saw the problem of virtue more admirably expressed.—The author of *Paquita la Sevillane* must have dreamed many dreams!

"I can speak of such things without the hypocritical gloss lent them by young men, for I am old before my time. I have no illusions left. Can a man have any illusions in the trade I follow?"

By opening the game in this tone, Lousteau cut out all excursions in the *Pays de Tendre,* where genuine passion beats the bush so long; he went straight to the point and placed himself in a position to force the offer of what women often make a man pray for, for years; witness the hapless Public Prosecutor, to whom the greatest favor had consisted in clasping Dinah's hand to his heart more tenderly than usual as they walked, happy man!

And Madame de la Baudraye, to be true to her reputation as a Superior Woman, tried to console the Manfred of the Press by prophesying such a future of love as he had not had in his mind.

"You have sought pleasure," said she, "but you have never

loved. Believe me, true love often comes late in life. Remember Monsieur de Gentz, who fell in love in his old age with Fanny Ellsler, and left the Revolution of July to take its course while he attended the dancer's rehearsals."

"It seems to me unlikely," replied Lousteau. "I can still believe in love, but I have ceased to believe in woman. There are in me, I suppose, certain defects which hinder me from being loved, for I have often been thrown over. Perhaps I have too strong a feeling for the ideal—like all men who have looked too closely into reality——"

Madame de la Baudraye at last heard the mind of a man who, flung into the wittiest Parisian circles, represented to her its most daring axioms, its almost artless depravity, its advanced convictions; who, if he were not really superior, acted superiority extremely well. Étienne, performing before Dinah, had all the success of a first night. *Paquita* of Sancerre scented the storms, the atmosphere of Paris. She spent one of the most delightful days of her life with Lousteau and Bianchon, who told her strange tales about the great men of the day, the anecdotes which will some day form the *Ana* of our century; sayings and doings that were the common talk of Paris, but quite new to her.

Of course, Lousteau spoke very ill of the great female celebrity of Le Berry, with the obvious intention of flattering Madame de la Baudraye and leading her into literary confidences, by suggesting that she could rival so great a writer. This praise intoxicated Madame de la Baudraye; and Monsieur de Clagny, Monsieur Gravier, and Gatien, all thought her warmer in her manner to Étienne than she had been on the previous day. Dinah's three *attachés* greatly regretted having all gone to Sancerre to blow the trumpet in honor of the evening at Anzy; nothing, to hear them, had ever been so brilliant. The Hours had fled on feet so light that none had marked their pace. The two Parisians they spoke of as perfect prodigies.

These exaggerated reports loudly proclaimed on the Mall brought sixteen persons to Anzy that evening, some in family

coaches, some in wagonettes, and a few bachelors on hired saddle horses. By about seven o'clock this provincial company had made a more or less graceful entry into the huge Anzy drawing-room, which Dinah, warned of the invasion, had lighted up, giving it all the lustre it was capable of by taking the holland covers off the handsome furniture, for she regarded this assembly as one of her great triumphs. Lousteau, Bianchon, and Dinah exchanged meaning looks as they studied the attitudes and listened to the speeches of these visitors, attracted by curiosity.

What invalided ribbons, what ancestral laces, what ancient flowers, more imaginative than imitative, were boldly displayed on some perennial caps! The Présidente Boirouge, Bianchon's cousin, exchanged a few words with the doctor, from whom she extracted some "advice gratis" by expatiating on certain pains in the chest, which she declared were nervous, but which he ascribed to chronic indigestion.

"Simply drink a cup of tea every day an hour after dinner, as the English do, and you will get over it, for what you suffer from is an English malady," Bianchon replied very gravely.

"He is certainly a great physician," said the Présidente, coming back to Madame de Clagny, Madame Popinot-Chandier, and Madame Gorju, the Mayor's wife.

"They say," replied Madame de Clagny behind her fan, "that Dinah sent for him, not so much with a view to the elections as to ascertain why she has no children."

In the first excitement of this success, Lousteau introduced the great doctor as the only possible candidate at the ensuing elections. But Bianchon, to the great satisfaction of the new Sous-préfet, remarked that it seemed to him almost impossible to give up science in favor of politics.

"Only a physician without a practice," said he, "could care to be returned as a deputy. Nominate statesmen, thinkers, men whose knowledge is universal, and who are capable of placing themselves on the high level which a legislator should occupy. That is what is lacking in our Chambers, and what our country needs."

Two or three young ladies, some of the younger men, and the elder women stared at Lousteau as if he were a mountebank.

"Monsieur Gatien Boirouge declares that Monsieur Lousteau makes twenty thousand francs a year by his writings," observed the Mayor's wife to Madame de Clagny. "Can you believe it?"

"Is it possible? Why, a Public Prosecutor gets but a thousand crowns!"

"Monsieur Gatien," said Madame Chandier, "get Monsieur Lousteau to talk a little louder. I have not heard him yet."

"What pretty boots he wears," said Mademoiselle Chandier to her brother, "and how they shine!"

"Yes—patent leather."

"Why haven't you the same?"

Lousteau began to feel that he was too much on show, and saw in the manners of the good townsfolk indications of the desires that had brought them there.

"What trick can I play them?" thought he.

At this moment the footman, so called—a farm-servant put into livery—brought in the letters and papers, and among them a packet of proof, which the journalist left for Bianchon; for Madame de la Baudraye, on seeing the parcel, of which the form and string were obviously from the printers, exclaimed:

"What, does literature pursue you even here?"

"Not literature," replied he, "but a review in which I am now finishing a story to come out ten days hence. I have reached the stage of '*To be concluded in our next,*' so I was obliged to give my address to the printer. Oh, we eat very hard-earned bread at the hands of these speculators in black and white! I will give you a description of these editors of magazines."

"When will the conversation begin?" Madame de Clagny asked of Dinah, as one might ask, "When do the fireworks go off?"

"I fancied we should hear some amusing stories," said Madame Popinot to her cousin, the Présidente Boirouge.

At this moment, when the good folks of Sancerre were beginning to murmur like an impatient pit, Lousteau observed that Bianchon was lost in a meditation inspired by the wrapper round the proofs.

"What is it?" asked Étienne.

"Why, here is the most fascinating romance possible on some spoiled proof used to wrap yours in. Here, read it. *Olympia, or Roman Revenge.*"

"Let us see," said Lousteau, taking the sheet the doctor held out to him, and he read aloud as follows:—

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cavern. Rinaldo, indignant at his companions' cowardice, for they had no courage but in the open field, and dared not venture into Rome, looked at them with scorn.

"Then I go alone?" said he. He seemed to reflect, and then he went on: "You are poor wretches. I shall proceed alone, and have the rich booty to myself.—You hear me! Farewell."

"My Captain," said Lamberti, "if you should be captured without having succeeded?"

"God protects me!" said Rinaldo, pointing to the sky.

With these words he went out, and on his way he met the steward

"That is the end of the page," said Lousteau, to whom every one had listened devoutly.

"He is reading his work to us," said Gatien to Madame Popinot-Chandier's son.

"From the first word, ladies," said the journalist, jumping at an opportunity of mystifying the natives, "it is evident that the brigands are in a cave. But how careless romancers of that date were as to details which are nowadays so closely, so elaborately studied under the name of 'local color.' If the robbers were in a cavern, instead of pointing to the sky he ought to have pointed to the vault above him.—In spite of this inaccuracy, Rinaldo strikes me as a man of spirit, and his appeal to God is quite Italian. There must have been a touch of local color in this romance. Why, what with brigands, and a cavern, and one Lamberti who could foresee future possibilities—there is a whole melodrama in that page. Add to these elements a little intrigue, a peasant maiden with her hair dressed high, short skirts, and a hundred or so of bad couplets.—Oh! the public would crowd to see it! And then Rinaldo—how well the name suits Lafont! By giving him black whiskers, tightly-fitting trousers, a cloak, a moustache, a pistol, and a peaked hat—if the manager of the Vaudeville Theatre were but bold enough to pay for a few newspaper articles, that would secure fifty performances, and six thousand francs for the author's rights, if only I were to cry it up in my columns.

"To proceed:—

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The Duchess of Bracciano found her glove. Adolphe, who had brought her back to the orange grove, might certainly have supposed that there was some purpose in her forgetfulness, for at this moment the arbor was deserted. The sound of the festivities was audible in the distance. The puppet show that had been promised had attracted all the guests to the ballroom. Never had Olympia looked more beautiful.

Her lover's eyes met hers with an answering glow, and they understood each other. There was a moment of silence, delicious to their souls, and impossible to describe. They sat down on the same bench where they had sat in the presence of the Cavaliere Paluzzi and the

"Devil take it! Our Rinaldo has vanished!" cried Lousteau. "But a literary man once started by this page would make rapid progress in the comprehension of the plot. The Duchesse Olympia is a lady who could intentionally forget her gloves in a deserted arbor."

"Unless she may be classed between the oyster and head-clerk of an office, the two creatures nearest to marble in the zoological kingdom, it is impossible not to discern in Olympia—" Bianchon began.

"A woman of thirty," Madame de la Baudraye hastily interposed, fearing some all too medical term.

"Then Adolphe must be two-and-twenty," the doctor went on, "for an Italian woman at thirty is equivalent to a Parisian of forty."

"From these two facts, the romance may easily be reconstructed," said Lousteau. "And this Cavaliere Paluzzi—what a man!—The style is weak in these two passages; the author was perhaps a clerk in the Excise Office, and wrote the novel to pay his tailor!"

"In his time," said Bianchon, "the censor flourished; you must show as much indulgence to a man who underwent the ordeal by scissors in 1805 as to those who went to the scaffold in 1793."

"Do you understand in the least?" asked Madame Gorju timidly of Madame de Clagny.

The Public Prosecutor's wife, who, to use a phrase of Monsieur Gravier's, might have put a Cossack to flight in 1814, straightened herself in her chair like a horseman in his

stirrups, and made a face at her neighbor, conveying, "They are looking at us; we must smile as if we understood."

"Charming!" said the Mayoress to Gatien. "Pray go on, Monsieur Lousteau."

Lousteau looked at the two women, two Indian idols, and contrived to keep his countenance. He thought it desirable to say, "Attention!" before going on as follows:—

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dress rustled in the silence. Suddenly Cardinal Borborigano stood before the Duchess.

"His face was gloomy, his brow was dark with clouds, and a bitter smile lurked in his wrinkles.

"Madam," said he, "you are under suspicion. If you are guilty, fly. If you are not, still fly; because, whether criminal or innocent, you will find it easier to defend yourself from a distance."

"I thank your Eminence for your solicitude," said she. "The Duke of Bracciano will reappear when I find it needful to prove that he is alive."

"Cardinal Borborigano!" exclaimed Bianchon. "By the Pope's keys! If you do not agree with me that there is a magnificent creation in the very name, if at those words *dress rustled in the silence* you do not feel all the poetry thrown into the part of Schedoni by Mrs. Radcliffe in *The Black Penitent,* you do not deserve to read a romance."

"For my part," said Dinah, who had some pity on the eighteen faces gazing up at Lousteau, "I see how the story is progressing. I know it all. I am in Rome; I can see the body of a murdered husband whose wife, as bold as she

is wicked, has made her bed on the crater of a volcano. Every night, at every kiss, she says to herself, 'All will be discovered!'

"Can you see her," said Lousteau, "clasping Monsieur Adolphe in her arms, to her heart, throwing her whole life into a kiss?—Adolphe I see as a well-made young man, but not clever—the sort of man an Italian woman likes. Rinaldo hovers behind the scenes of a plot we do not know, but which must be as full of incident as a melodrama by Pixérécourt. Or we can imagine Rinaldo crossing the stage in the background like a figure in one of Victor Hugo's plays."

"He, perhaps, is the husband," exclaimed Madame de la Baudraye.

"Do you understand anything of it all?" Madame Piédefer asked of the Présidente.

"Why, it is charming!" said Dinah to her mother.

All the good folks of Sancerre sat with eyes as large as five-franc pieces.

"Go on, I beg," said the hostess.

Lousteau went on:—

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"Your key——"

"Have you lost it?"

"It is in the arbor."

"Let us hasten."

"Can the Cardinal have taken it?

"No, here it is."

"What danger we have escaped!"

Olympia looked at the key, and fancied she recognized it as her own. But Rinaldo had changed it; his cunning had triumphed; he had the right key. Like a modern Cartouche, he was no less skilful than bold, and suspecting that nothing but a vast treasure could require a duchess to carry it constantly at her belt.

"Guess!" cried Lousteau. "The corresponding page is not here. We must look to page 212 to relieve our anxiety."

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"If the key had been lost?"

"He would now be a dead man."

"Dead? But ought you not to grant the last request he made, and to give him his liberty on the conditions——"

"You do not know him."

"But——"

"Silence! I took you for my lover, not for my confessor."

Adolphe was silent.

"And then comes an exquisite galloping goat, a tailpiece drawn by Normand, and cut by Duplat.—The names are signed," said Lousteau.

"Well, and then?" said such of the audience as understood.

"That is the end of the chapter," said Lousteau. "The fact of this tailpiece changes my views as to the authorship. To have his book got up, under the Empire, with vignettes engraved on wood, the writer must have been a Councillor of State, or Madame Barthélemy-Hadot, or the late lamented Desforges, or Sewrin."

"'Adolphe was silent.'—Ah!" cried Bianchon, "the Duchess must have been under thirty."

"If there is no more, invent a conclusion," said Madame de la Baudraye.

"You see," said Lousteau, "the waste sheet has been printed fair on one side only. In printer's lingo, it is a back sheet, or, to make it clearer, the other side which would have to be printed is covered all over with pages printed one above another, all experiments in making up. It would take too long to explain to you all the complications of a making-up

sheet; but you may understand that it will show no more trace of the first twelve pages that were printed on it than you would in the least remember the first stroke of the bastinado if a Pasha had condemned you to have fifty on the soles of your feet."

"I am quite bewildered," said Madame Popinot-Chandier to Monsieur Gravier. "I am vainly trying to connect the Councillor of State, the Cardinal, the key, and the making-up——"

"You have not the key to the jest," said Monsieur Gravier. "Well! no more have I, fair lady, if that can comfort you."

"But here is another sheet," said Bianchon, hunting on the table where the proofs had been laid.

"Capital!" said Lousteau, "and it is complete and uninjured. It is signed IV.; J, Second Edition. Ladies, the figure IV. means that this is part of the fourth volume. The letter J, the tenth letter of the alphabet, shows that this is the tenth sheet. And it is perfectly clear to me, that in spite of any publisher's tricks, this romance, in four duodecimo volumes, had a great success, since it came to a second edition.—We will read on and find a clue to the mystery.

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corridor; but finding that he was pursued by the Duchess' people

"Oh, get along!"

"But," said Madame de la Baudraye, "some important events have taken place between your waste sheet and this page."

"This complete sheet, madame, this precious made-up sheet. But does the waste sheet in which the Duchess forgets her gloves in the arbor belong to the fourth volume? Well, deuce take it—to proceed.

Rinaldo saw no safer refuge than to make forthwith for the cellar where the treasures of the Bracciano fam-

ily no doubt lay hid. As light of foot as Camilla sung by the Latin poet, he flew to the entrance to the Baths of Vespasian. The torchlight already flickered on the walls when Rinaldo, with the readiness bestowed on him by nature, discovered the door concealed in the stonework, and suddenly vanished. A hideous thought then flashed on Rinaldo's brain like lightning rending a cloud: He was imprisoned! He felt the wall with uneasy haste

"Yes, this made-up sheet follows the waste sheet. The last page of the damaged sheet was 212, and this is 217. In fact, since Rinaldo, who in the earlier fragment stole the key of the Duchess' treasure by exchanging it for another very much like it, is now—on the made-up sheet—in the palace of the Dukes of Bracciano, the story seems to me to be advancing to a conclusion of some kind. I hope it is as clear to you as it becomes to me.—I understand that the festivities are over, the lovers have returned to the Bracciano Palace; it is night—one o'clock in the morning. Rinaldo will have a good time."

"And Adolphe too!" said Président Boirouge, who was considered rather free in his speech.

"And the style!" said Bianchon.—"Rinaldo, who saw *no better refuge than to make for the cellar.*"

"It is quite clear that neither Maradan, nor Treuttel and Wurtz, nor Doguereau, were the printers," said Lousteau, "for they employ correctors who revised the proofs, a luxury in which our publishers might very well indulge, and the writers of the present day, would benefit greatly. Some scrubby pamphlet printer on the Quay——"

"What quay?" a lady asked of her neighbor. "They spoke of baths——"

"Pray go on," said Madame de la Baudraye.

"At any rate, it is not by a councillor," said Bianchon.

"It may be by Madame Hadot," replied Lousteau.

"What has Madame Hadot of La Charité to do with it?" the Présidente asked of her son.

"This Madame Hadot, my dear friend," the hostess answered, "was an authoress, who lived at the time of the Consulate."

"What, did women write in the Emperor's time?" asked Madame Popinot-Chandier.

"What of Madame de Genlis and Madame de Staël?" cried the Public Prosecutor, piqued on Dinah's account by this remark.

"To be sure!"

"I beg you to go on," said Madame de la Baudraye to Lousteau.

Lousteau went on saying: "Page 218.

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>
> and gave a shriek of despair when he had vainly sought any trace of a secret spring. It was impossible to ignore the horrible truth. The door, cleverly constructed to serve the vengeful purposes of the Duchess, could not be opened from within. Rinaldo laid his cheek against the wall in various spots; nowhere could he feel the warmer air from the passage. He had hoped he might find a crack that would show him where there was an opening in the wall, but nothing, nothing! The whole seemed to be of one block of marble.
>
> Then he gave a hollow roar like that of a hyæna——

"Well, we fancied that the cry of the hyæna was a recent invention of our own!" said Lousteau, "and it was already

known to the literature of the Empire. It is even introduced with a certain skill in natural history, as we see in the word *hollow*."

"Make no more comments, monsieur," said Madame de la Baudraye.

"There, you see!" cried Bianchon. "Interest, the romantic demon, has you by the collar, as he had me a while ago."

"Read on," cried de Clagny, "I understand."

"What a coxcomb!" said the Presiding Judge in a whisper to his neighbor the Sous-préfet.

"He wants to please Madame de la Baudraye," replied the new Sous-préfet.

"Well, then, I will read straight on," said Lousteau solemnly.

Everybody listened in dead silence.

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A deep groan answered Rinaldo's cry, but in his alarm he took it for an echo, so weak and hollow was the sound. It could not proceed from any human breast.

"Santa Maria!" said the voice.

"If I stir from this spot I shall never find it again," thought Rinaldo, when he had recovered his usual presence of mind. "If I knock, I shall be discovered. What am I to do?"

"Who is here?" asked the voice.

"Hallo!" cried the brigand; "do the toads here talk?"

"I am the Duke of Bracciano. Whoever you may be, if you are not a follower of the Duchess', in the name of all the saints, come towards me."

"I should have to know where to find you, Monsieur le Duc," said Rinaldo, with the insolence of a man who knows himself to be necessary.

"I can see you, my friend, for my eyes are accustomed to the darkness. Listen: walk straight forward—good; now turn to the left—come on—this way. There, we are close to each other."

Rinaldo putting out his hands as a precaution, touched some iron bars.

"I am being deceived," cried the bandit.

"No, you are touching my cage.

Sit down on a broken shaft of porphyry that is there."

"How can the Duke of Bracciano be in a cage?" asked the brigand.

"My friend, I have been here for thirty months, standing up, unable to sit down—— But you, who are you?"

"I am Rinaldo, prince of the Campagna, the chief of four-and-twenty brave men whom the law describes as miscreants, whom all the ladies admire, and whom judges hang in obedience to an old habit."

"God be praised! I am saved. An honest man would have been afraid, whereas I am sure of coming to an understanding with you," cried the Duke. "Oh, my worthy

deliverer, you must be armed to the teeth."

"*E verissimo*" (most true).

"Do you happen to have——"

"Yes; files, pincers—*Corpo di Bacco!* I came to borrow the treas ures of the Bracciani on a long loan."

"You will earn a handsome share of them very legitimately, my good Rinaldo, and we may possibly go man hunting together——"

"You surprise me, Eccellenza!"

"Listen to me, Rinaldo. I will say nothing of the craving for vengeance that gnaws at my heart. I have been here for thirty months —you too are Italian—you will un-

derstand me! Alas, my friend, my fatigue and my horrible incarceration are as nothing in comparison with the rage that devours my soul. The Duchess of Bracciano is still one of the most beautiful women in Rome. I loved her well enough to be jealous——"

"You, her husband?"

"Yes, I was wrong, no doubt."

"It is not the correct thing, to be sure," said Rinaldo.

"My jealousy was roused by the Duchess' conduct," the Duke went on. "The event proved me right. A young Frenchman fell in love with Olympia, and she loved him. I had proofs of their reciprocal affection

"Pray excuse me, ladies," said Lousteau, "but I find it impossible to go on without remarking to you how direct this Empire literature is, going to the point without any details, a characteristic, as it seems to me, of a primitive time. The literature of that period holds a place between the summaries of chapters in *Télémaque* and the categorical reports of a public office. It had ideas, but refrained from expressing them, it was so scornful! It was observant, but would not communicate its observations to any one, it was so miserly! Nobody but Fouché ever mentioned what he had observed. 'At that time,' to quote the words of one of the most imbecile critics in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* 'literature was content with a clear sketch and the simple outline of all antique statues. It did not dance over its periods.'—I should think not! It had no periods to dance over. It had no words to make play with. You were plainly told that Lubin loved Toinette; that Toinette did not love Lubin; that Lubin killed Toinette and the police caught Lubin, who was put in prison, tried at the assizes, and guillotined.—A strong sketch, a clear outline! What a noble drama! Well, in these days the barbarians make words sparkle."

"Like hair in a frost," said Monsieur de Clagny.

"So those are the airs you affect?"* retorted Lousteau.

"What can he mean?" asked Madame de Clagny, puzzled by this vile pun.

"I seem to be walking in the dark," replied the Mayoress.

"The jest would be lost in an explanation," remarked Gatien.

"Nowadays," Lousteau went on, "a novelist draws characters, and instead of a 'simple outline,' he unveils the human heart and gives you some interest either in Lubin or in Toinette."

* The rendering given above is only intended to link the various speeches into coherence; it has no resemblance with the French. In the original, "Font chatoyer les *mots*."

"Et quelquefois les *morts*," dit Monsieur de Clagny.

"Ah! Lousteau! vous vous donnez de ces R-là (airs-là)."

Literally: "And sometimes the dead."—"Ah, are those the airs you assume?"—the play on the insertion of the letter R (*mots, morts*) has no meaning in English.

"For my part, I am alarmed at the progress of public knowledge in the matter of literature," said Bianchon. "Like the Russians, beaten by Charles XII., who at last learned the art of war, the reader has learned the art of writing. Formerly all that was expected of a romance was that it should be interesting. As to style, no one cared for that, not even the author; as to ideas—zero; as to local color—*non est.* By degrees the reader has demanded style, interest, pathos, and complete information; he insists on the five literary senses—Invention, Style, Thought, Learning, and Feeling. Then came criticism commenting on everything. The critic, incapable of inventing anything but calumny, pronounces every work that proceeds from a not perfect brain to be deformed. Some magicians, as Walter Scott, for instance, having appeared in the world, who combined all the five literary senses, such writers as had but one—wit or learning, style or feeling—these cripples, these acephalous, mained or purblind creatures—in a literay sense—have taken to shrieking that all is lost, and have preached a crusade against men who were spoiling the business, or have denounced their works."

"The history of your last literary quarrel!" Dinah observed.

"For pity's sake, come back to the Duke of Bracciano," cried Monsieur de Clagny.

To the despair of all the company, Lousteau went on with the made-up sheet.

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I then wished to make sure of my misfortune that I might be avenged under the protection of Providence and the Law. The Duchess guessed my intentions. We were at war in our purposes before we fought with poison in our hands. We tried to tempt each other to such confidence as we could not feel, I to induce her to drink a potion, she to get posses-

sion of me. She was a woman, and she won the day; for women have a snare more than we men. I fell into it—I was happy; but I awoke next day in this iron cage. All through the day I bellowed with rage in the

darkness of this cellar, over which is the Duchess' bedroom. At night an ingenious counterpoise acting as a lift raised me through the floor, and I saw the Duchess in her lover's arms. She threw me a piece of bread, my daily pittance.

"Thus have I lived for thirty months! From this marble prison my cries can reach no ear. There is no chance for me. I will hope no more. Indeed, the Duchess' room is at the furthest end of the palace, and when I am carried up there none can hear my voice. Each time I see my wife she shows me the

poison I had prepared for her and her lover. I crave it for myself, but she will not let me die; she gives me bread, and I eat it.

"I have done well to eat and live; I had not reckoned on robbers!"

"Yes, Eccellenza, when those fools the honest men are asleep, we are wide awake."

"Oh, Rinaldo, all I possess shall be yours; we will share my treasure like brothers; I would give you everything—even to my Duchy——"

"Eccellenza, procure from the Pope an absolution *in articulo mortis.* It would be of more use to me in my walk of life."

"What you will. Only file through the bars of my cage and lend me your dagger. We have but little time, quick, quick! Oh, if my teeth were but files!—I have tried to eat through this iron."

"Eccellenza," said Rinaldo, "I have already filed through one bar."

"You are a god!"

"Your wife was at the fête given by the Princess Villaviciosa. She brought home her little Frenchman; she is drunk with love.—You have plenty of time."

"Have you done?"

"Yes."

"Your dagger?" said the Duke eagerly to the brigand.

"Here it is."

"Good. I hear the clatter of the spring."

"Do not forget me!" cried the robber, who knew what gratitude was.

"No more than my father," cried the Duke.

"Good-bye!" said Rinaldo. "Lord! How he flies up!" he added to himself as the Duke disappeared.—"No more than his father! If that is all he means to do for me.—And I

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had sworn a vow never to injure a woman!"

But let us leave the robber for a moment to his meditations and go up, like the Duke, to the rooms in the palace.

"Another tailpiece, a Cupid on a snail! And page 230 is blank," said the journalist. "Then there are two more blank pages before we come to the word it is such joy to write when one is unhappily so happy as to be a novelist—*Conclusion!*

CONCLUSION

Never had the Duchess been more lovely; she came from her bath clothed like a goddess, and on seeing

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Adolphe voluptuously reclining on piles of cushions—

"You are beautiful," said she.

"And so are you, Olympia!"

"And you still love me?"

"More and more," said he.

"Ah, none but a Frenchman knows how to love!" cried the Duchess. "Do you love me well to-night?"

"Yes."

"Then come!"

And with an impulse of love and hate—whether it was that Cardinal Borborigano had reminded her of her husband, or that she felt unwonted passion to display, she pressed the springs and held out her arms.

"That is all," said Lousteau, "for the foreman has torn off the rest in wrapping up my proofs. But it is enough to show that the author was full of promise."

"I cannot make head or tail of it," said Gatien Boirouge, who was the first to break the silence of the party from Sancerre.

"Nor I," replied Monsieur Gravier.

"And yet it is a novel of the time of the Empire," said Lousteau.

"By the way in which the brigand is made to speak," said Monsieur Gravier, "it is evident that the author knew nothing of Italy. Banditti do not allow themselves such graceful conceits."

Madame Gorju came up to Bianchon, seeing him pensive, and with a glance towards her daughter Mademoiselle Euphémie Gorju, the owner of a fairly good fortune—"What a rhodomontade!" said she. "The prescriptions you write are worth more than all that rubbish."

The Mayoress had elaborately worked up this speech, which, in her opinion, showed strong judgment.

"Well, madame, we must be lenient, we have but twenty pages out of a thousand," said Bianchon, looking at Mademoiselle Gorju, whose figure threatened terrible things after the birth of her first child.

"Well, Monsieur de Clagny," said Lousteau, "we were talking yesterday of the forms of revenge invented by husbands. What do you say to those invented by wives?"

"I say," replied the Public Prosecutor, "that the romance is not by a Councillor of State, but by a woman. For extravagant inventions the imagination of women far outdoes that of men; witness *Frankenstein* by Mrs. Shelley, *Leone Leoni* by George Sand, the works of Anne Radcliffe, and the *Nouveau Prométhée* (New Prometheus) of Camille de Maupin."

Dinah looked steadily at Monsieur de Clagny, making him feel, by an expression that gave him a chill, that in spite of the illustrious examples he had quoted, she regarded this as a reflection on *Paquita la Sevillane.*

"Pooh!" said little La Baudraye, "the Duke of Bracciano, whom his wife puts into a cage, and to whom she shows herself every night in the arms of her lover, will kill her—and do you call that revenge?—Our laws and our society are far more cruel."

"Why, little La Baudraye is talking!" said Monsieur Boirouge to his wife.

"Why, the woman is left to live on a small allowance, the world turns its back on her, she has no more finery, and no respect paid her—the two things which, in my opinion, are the sum-total of woman," said the little old man.

"But she has happiness!" said Madame de la Baudraye sententiously.

"No," said the master of the house, lighting his candle to go to bed, "for she has a lover."

"For a man who thinks of nothing but his vine-stocks and poles, he has some spunk," said Lousteau.

"Well, he must have something!" replied Bianchon.

Madame de la Baudraye, the only person who could hear Bianchon's remark, laughed so knowingly, and at the same time so bitterly, that the physician could guess the mystery of this woman's life; her premature wrinkles had been puzzling him all day.

But Dinah did not guess, on her part, the ominous prophecy contained for her in her husband's little speech, which her kind old Abbé Duret, if he had been alive, would not have failed to elucidate. Little La Baudraye had detected in Dinah's eyes, when she glanced at the journalist returning the ball of his jests, that swift and luminous flash of tenderness which gilds the gleam of a woman's eye when prudence is cast to the winds, and she is fairly carried away. Dinah paid no more heed to her husband's hint to her to observe the proprieties than Lousteau had done to Dinah's significant warnings on the day of his arrival.

Any other man than Bianchon would have been surprised at Lousteau's immediate success; but he was so much the doctor, that he was not even nettled at Dinah's marked pref-

erence for the newspaper- rather than the prescription-writer! In fact, Dinah, herself famous, was naturally more alive to wit than to fame. Love generally prefers contrast to similitude. Everything was against the physician—his frankness, his simplicity; and his profession. And this is why: Women who want to love—and Dinah wanted to love as much as to be loved—have an instinctive aversion for men who are devoted to an absorbing occupation; in spite of superiority, they are all women in the matter of encroachment. Lousteau, a poet and journalist, and a libertine with a veneer of misanthropy, had that tinsel of the intellect, and led the half-idle life that attracts women. The blunt good sense and keen insight of the really great man weighed upon Dinah, who would not confess her own smallness even to herself. She said in her mind—"The doctor is perhaps the better man, but I do not like him."

Then, again, she reflected on his professional duties, wondering whether a woman could ever be anything but a *subject* to a medical man, who saw so many subjects in the course of a day's work. The first sentence of the aphorism written by Bianchon in her album was a medical observation striking so directly at woman, that Dinah could not fail to be hit by it. And then Bianchon was leaving on the morrow; his practice required his return. What woman, short of having Cupid's mythological dart in her heart, could decide in so short a time?

These little things, which lead to such great catastrophes—having been seen in a mass by Bianchon, he pronounced the verdict he had come to as to Madame de la Baudraye in a few words to Lousteau, to the journalist's great amazement.

While the two friends stood talking together, a storm was gathering in the Sancerre circle, who could not in the least understand Lousteau's paraphrases and commentaries, and who vented it on their hostess. Far from finding in his talk the romance which the Public Prosecutor, the Sous-préfet, the Presiding Judge, and his deputy, Lebas, had

discovered there—to say nothing of Monsieur de la Baudraye and Dinah—the ladies now gathered round the tea-table, took the matter as a practical joke, and accused the Muse of Sancerre of having a finger in it. They had all looked forward to a delightful evening, and had all strained in vain every faculty of their mind. Nothing makes provincial folks so angry as the notion of having been a laughing-stock for Paris folks.

Madame Piédefer left the table to say to her daughter, "Do go and talk to the ladies; they are quite annoyed by your behavior."

Lousteau could not fail to see Dinah's great superiority over the best women of Sancerre; she was better dressed, her movements were graceful, her complexion was exquisitely white by candlelight—in short, she stood out against this background of old faces, shy and ill-dressed girls, like a queen in the midst of her court. Visions of Paris faded from his brain; Lousteau was accepting the provincial surroundings; and while he had too much imagination to remain unimpressed by the royal splendor of this château, the beautiful carvings, and the antique beauty of the rooms, he had also too much experience to overlook the value of the personality which completed this gem of the Renaissance. So by the time the visitors from Sancerre had taken their leave one by one—for they had an hour's drive before them—when no one remained in the drawing-room but Monsieur de Clagny, Monsieur Lebas, Gatien, and Monsieur Gravier, who were all to sleep at Anzy—the journalist had already changed his mind about Dinah. His opinion had gone through the evolution that Madame de la Baudraye had so audaciously prophesied at their first meeting.

"Ah, what things they will say about us on the drive home!" cried the mistress of the house, as she returned to the drawing-room after seeing the Président and the Présidente to their carriage with Madame and Mademoiselle Popinot-Chandier.

The rest of the evening had its pleasant side. In the inti-

macy of a small party each one brought to the conversation his contribution of epigrams on the figure the visitors from Sancerre had cut during Lousteau's comments on the paper wrapped round the proofs.

"My dear fellow," said Bianchon to Lousteau as they went to bed—they had an enormous room with two beds in it—"you will be the happy man of this woman's choice—*née* Piédefer!"

"Do you think so?"

"It is quite natural. You are supposed here to have had many mistresses in Paris; and to a woman there is something indescribably inviting a man whom other women favor—something attractive and fascinating; is it that she prides herself on being longer remembered than all the rest? that she appeals to his experience, as a sick man will pay more to a famous physician? or that she is flattered by the revival of a world-worn heart?"

"Vanity and the senses count for so much in love affairs," said Lousteau, "that there may be some truth in all those hypotheses. However, if I remain, it will be in consequence of the certificate of innocence, without ignorance, that you have given Dinah. She is handsome, is she not?"

"Love will make her beautiful," said the doctor. "And, after all, she will be a rich widow some day or other! And a child would secure her the life-interest in the Master of La Baudraye's fortune——"

"Why, it is quite an act of virtue to make love to her," said Lousteau, rolling himself up in the bed-clothes, "and to-morrow, with your help—yes, to-morrow, I—well, good-night."

On the following day, Madame de la Baudraye, to whom her husband had six months since given a pair of horses, which he also used in the fields, and an old carriage that rattled on the road, decided that she would take Bianchon so far on his way as Cosne, where he would get into the Lyons diligence as it passed through. She also took her mother and Lousteau, but she intended to drop her mother at La Baudraye

to go on to Cosne with the two Parisians, and return alone with Étienne. She was elegantly dressed, as the journalist at once perceived—bronze kid boots, gray silk stockings, a muslin dress, a green silk scarf with shaded fringe at the ends, and a pretty black lace bonnet with flowers in it. As to Lousteau, the wretch had assumed his war-paint—patent leather boots, trousers of English kerseymere with pleats in front, a very open waistcoat showing a particularly fine shirt and the black brocade waterfall of his handsomest cravat, and a very thin, very short black riding-coat.

Monsieur de Clagny and Monsieur Gravier looked at each other, feeling rather silly as they beheld the two Parisians in the carriage, while they, like two simpletons, were left standing at the foot of the steps. Monsieur de la Baudraye, who stood at the top waving his little hand in a little farewell to the doctor, could not forbear from smiling as he heard Monsieur de Clagny say to Monsieur Gravier:

"You should have escorted them on horseback."

At this juncture, Gatien, riding Monsieur de la Baudraye's quiet little mare, came out of the side road from the stables and joined the party in the chaise.

"Ah, good," said the Receiver-General, "the boy has mounted guard."

"What a bore!" cried Dinah as she saw Gatien. "In thirteen years—for I have been married nearly thirteen years—I have never had three hours' liberty."

"Married, madame?" said the journalist with a smile. "You remind me of a saying of Michaud's—he was so witty! He was setting out for the Holy Land, and his friends were remonstrating with him, urging his age, and the perils of such an expedition. 'And then,' said one, 'you are married.'—'Married!' said he, 'so little married.' "

Even the rigid Madame Piédefer could not repress a smile.

"I should not be surprised to see Monsieur de Clagny mounted on my pony to complete the escort," said Dinah.

"Well, if the Public Prosecutor does not pursue us, you can get rid of this little fellow at Sancerre. Bianchon must,

of course, have left something behind on his table—the notes for the first lecture of his course—and you can ask Gatien to go back to Anzy to fetch it."

This simple little plot put Madame de la Baudraye into high spirits. From the road between Anzy to Sancerre, a glorious landscape frequently comes into view, of the noble stretches of the Loire, looking like a lake, and it was got over very pleasantly, for Dinah was happy in finding herself well understood. Love was discussed in theory, a subject allowing lovers *in petto* to take the measure, as it were, of each other's heart. The journalist took a tone of refined corruption to prove that love obeys no law, that the character of the lovers gives infinite variety to its incidents, that the circumstances of social life add to the multiplicity of its manifestations, that in love all is possible and true, and that any given woman, after resisting every temptation and the seductions of the most passionate lover, may be carried off her feet in the course of a few hours by a fancy, an internal whirlwind of which God alone would ever know the secret!

"Why," said he, "is not that the key to all the adventures we have talked over these three days past?"

For these three days, indeed, Dinah's lively imagination had been full of the most insidious romances, and the conversation of the two Parisians had affected the woman as the most mischievous reading might have done. Lousteau watched the effects of this clever manœuvre, to seize the moment when his prey, whose readiness to be caught was hidden under the abstraction caused by irresolution, should be quite dizzy.

Dinah wished to show La Baudraye to her two visitors, and the farce was duly played out of remembering the papers left by Bianchon in his room at Anzy. Gatien flew off at a gallop to obey his sovereign; Madame Piédefer went to do some shopping in Sancerre; and Dinah went on to Cosne alone with the two friends. Lousteau took his seat by the lady, Bianchon riding backwards. The two friends talked affectionately and with deep compassion for the fate of this choice nature so ill understood and in the midst of such vulgar sur-

roundings. Bianchon served Lousteau well by making fun of the Public Prosecutor, of Monsieur Gravier, and of Gatien; there was a tone of such genuine contempt in his remarks, that Madame de la Baudraye dared not take the part of her adorers.

"I perfectly understand the position you have maintained," said the doctor as they crossed the Loire. "You were inaccessible excepting to that brain-love which often leads to heart-love; and not one of those men, it is very certain, is capable of disguising what, at an early stage of life, is disgusting to the senses in the eyes of a refined woman. To you, now, love is indispensable."

"Indispensable!" cried Dinah, looking curiously at the doctor. "Do you mean that you prescribe love to me?"

"If you go on living as you live now, in three years you will be hideous," replied Bianchon in a dictatorial tone.

"Monsieur!" said Madame de la Baudraye, almost frightened.

"Forgive my friend," said Lousteau, half jestingly. "He is always the medical man, and to him love is merely a question of hygiene. But he is quite disinterested—it is for your sake only that he speaks—as is evident, since he is starting in an hour——"

At Cosne a little crowd gathered round the old repainted chaise, with the arms on the panels granted by Louis XIV. to the new La Baudraye. Gules, a pair of scales or; on a chief azure (color on color) three cross-crosslets argent. For supporters two greyhounds argent, collared azure, chained or. The ironical motto, *Deo sic patet fides et hominibus,* had been inflicted on the converted Calvinist by Hozier the satirical.

"Let us get out; they will come and find us," said the Baroness, desiring her coachman to keep watch.

Dinah took Bianchon's arm, and the doctor set off by the banks of the Loire at so rapid a pace that the journalist had to linger behind. The physician had explained by a single wink that he meant to do Lousteau a good turn.

"You have been attracted by Étienne," said Bianchon to

Dinah; "he has appealed strongly to your imagination; last night we were talking about you.—He loves you. But he is frivolous, and difficult to hold; his poverty compels him to live in Paris, while everything condemns you to live at Sancerre. —Take a lofty view of life. Make Lousteau your friend; do not ask too much of him; he will come three times a year to spend a few days with you, and you will owe to him your beauty, happiness, and fortune. Monsieur de la Baudraye may live to be a hundred; but he might die in a few days if he should leave off the flannel winding-sheet in which he swathes himself. So run no risks, be prudent both of you.—Say not a word—I have read your heart."

Madame de la Baudraye was defenceless under this serried attack, and in the presence of a man who spoke at once as a doctor, a confessor, and confidential friend.

"Indeed!" said she. "Can you suppose that any woman would care to compete with a journalist's mistresses?—Monsieur Lousteau strikes me as agreeable and witty; but he is *blasé*, etc., etc.——"

Dinah had turned back, and was obliged to check the flow of words by which she tried to disguise her intentions; for Étienne, who seemed to be studying progress in Cosne, was coming to meet them.

"Believe me," said Bianchon, "what he wants is to be truly loved; and if he alters his course of life, it will be to the benefit of his talent."

Dinah's coachman hurried up breathlessly to say that the diligence had come in, and they walked on quickly, Madame de la Baudraye between the two men.

"Good-bye, my children!" said Bianchon, before they got into the town, "you have my blessing!"

He released Madame de la Baudraye's hand from his arm, and allowed Lousteau to draw it into his, with a tender look, as he pressed it to his heart. What a difference to Dinah! Étienne's arm thrilled her deeply. Bianchon's had not stirred her in the least. She and the journalist exchanged one of those glowing looks that are more than an avowal.

"Only provincial women wear muslin gowns in these days," thought Lousteau to himself, "the only stuff which shows every crease. This woman, who has chosen me for her lover, will make a fuss over her frock! If she had but put on a foulard skirt, I should be happy.—What is the meaning of these difficulties——"

While Lousteau was wondering whether Dinah had put on a muslin gown on purpose to protect herself by an insuperable obstacle, Bianchon, with the help of the coachman, was seeing his luggage piled on the diligence. Finally, he came to take leave of Dinah, who was excessively friendly with him.

"Go home, Madame la Baronne, leave me here—Gatien will be coming," he added in an undertone. "It is getting late," said he aloud. "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye—great man!" cried Lousteau, shaking hands with Bianchon.

When the journalist and Madame de la Baudraye, side by side in the rickety old chaise, had recrossed the Loire, they both were unready to speak. In these circumstances, the first words that break the silence are full of terrible meaning.

"Do you know how much I love you?" said the journalist point blank.

Victory might gratify Lousteau, but defeat could cause him no grief. This indifference was the secret of his audacity. He took Madame de la Baudraye's hand as he spoke these decisive words, and pressed it in both his; but Dinah gently released it.

"Yes, I am as good as an actress or a *grisette*," she said in a voice that trembled, though she spoke lightly. "But can you suppose that a woman who, in spite of her absurdities, has some intelligence, will have reserved the best treasures of her heart for a man who will regard her merely as a transient pleasure?—I am not surprised to hear from your lips the words which so many men have said to me—but——"

The coachman turned round.

"Here comes Monsieur Gatien," said he.

"I love you, I will have you, you shall be mine, for I have never felt for any woman the passion I have for you!" said Lousteau in her ear.

"In spite of my will, perhaps?" said she, with a smile.

"At least you must seem to have been assaulted to save my honor," said the Parisian, to whom the fatal immaculateness of clean muslin suggested a ridiculous notion.

Before Gatien had reached the end of the bridge, the outrageous journalist had crumpled up Madame de la Baudraye's muslin dress to such effect that she was absolutely not presentable.

"Oh, monsieur!" she exclaimed in dignified reproof.

"You defied me," said the Parisian.

But Gatien now rode up with the vehemence of a duped lover. To regain a little of Madame de la Baudraye's esteem, Lousteau did his best to hide the tumbled dress from Gatien's eyes by leaning out of the chaise to speak to him from Dinah's side.

"Go back to our inn," said he, "there is still time; the diligence does not start for half an hour. The papers are on the table of the room Bianchon was in; he wants them particularly, for he will be lost without his notes for the lecture."

"Pray go, Gatien," said Dinah to her young adorer, with an imperious glance. And the boy thus commanded turned his horse and was off with a loose rein.

"Go quickly to La Baudraye," cried Lousteau to the coachman. "Madame is not well—Your mother only will know the secret of my trick," added he, taking his seat by Dinah.

"You call such infamous conduct a trick?" cried Madame de la Baudraye, swallowing down a few tears that dried up with the fire of outraged pride.

She leaned back in the corner of the chaise, crossed her arms, and gazed out at the Loire and the landscape, at anything rather than at Lousteau. The journalist put on his most ingratiating tone, and talked till they reached La Baudraye, where Dinah fled indoors, trying not to be seen by any

one. In her agitation she threw herself on a sofa and burst into tears.

"If I am an object of horror to you, of aversion or scorn, I will go," said Lousteau, who had followed her. And he threw himself at her feet.

It was at this crisis that Madame Piédefer came in, saying to her daughter:

"What is the matter? What has happened?"

"Give your daughter another dress at once," said the audacious Parisian in the prim old lady's ear.

Hearing the mad gallop of Gatien's horse, Madame de la Baudraye fled to her bedroom, followed by her mother.

"There are no papers at the inn," said Gatien to Lousteau, who went out to meet him.

"And you found none at the Château d'Anzy either?" replied Lousteau.

"You have been making a fool of me," said Gatien, in a cold, set voice.

"Quite so," replied Lousteau. "Madame de la Baudraye was greatly annoyed by your choosing to follow her without being invited. Believe me, to bore a woman is a bad way of courting her. Dinah has played you a trick, and you have given her a laugh; it is more than any of you has done in these thirteen years past. You owe that success to Bianchon, for your cousin was the author of the Farce of the 'Manuscript.'—Will the horse get over it?" asked Lousteau with a laugh, while Gatien was wondering whether to be angry or not.

"The horse!" said Gatien.

At this moment Madame de la Baudraye came in, dressed in a velvet gown, and accompanied by her mother, who shot angry flashes at Lousteau. It would have been too rash for Dinah to seem cold or severe to Lousteau in Gatien's presence; and Étienne, taking advantage of this, offered his arm to the supposed Lucretia; however, she declined it.

"Do you mean to cast off a man who has vowed to live for you?" said he, walking close beside her. "I shall stop at Sancerre and go home to-morrow."

"Are you coming, mamma?" said Madame de la Baudraye to Madame Piédefer, thus avoiding a reply to the direct challenge by which Lousteau was forcing her to a decision.

Lousteau handed the mother into the chaise, he helped Madame de la Baudraye by gently taking her arm, and he and Gatien took the front seat, leaving the saddle horse at La Baudraye.

"You have changed your gown," said Gatien, blunderingly, to Dinah.

"Madame la Baronne was chilled by the cool air off the river," replied Lousteau. "Bianchon advised her to put on a warm dress."

Dinah turned as red as a poppy, and Madame Piédefer assumed a stern expression.

"Poor Bianchon! he is on the road to Paris. A noble soul!" said Lousteau.

"Oh, yes!" cried Madame de la Baudraye, "he is high-minded, full of delicate feeling——"

"We were in such good spirits when we set out," said Lousteau; "now you are overdone, and you speak to me so bitterly—why? Are you not accustomed to being told how handsome and how clever you are? For my part, I say boldly, before Gatien, I give up Paris; I mean to stay at Sancerre and swell the number of your *cavalieri serventi*. I feel so young again in my native district; I have quite forgotten Paris and all its wickedness, and its bores, and its wearisome pleasures.—Yes, my life seems in a way purified."

Dinah allowed Lousteau to talk without even looking at him; but at last there was a moment when this serpent's rhodomontade was really so inspired by the effort he made to affect passion in phrases and ideas of which the meaning, though hidden from Gatien, found a loud response in Dinah's heart, that she raised her eyes to his. This look seemed to crown Lousteau's joy; his wit flowed more freely, and at last he made Madame de la Baudraye laugh. When, under circumstances which so seriously compromise her pride, a woman has been made to laugh, she is finally committed.

As they drove in by the spacious graveled forecourt, with its lawn in the middle, and the large vases filled with flowers which so well set off the façade of Anzy, the journalist was saying:

"When women love, they forgive everything, even our crimes; when they do not love, they cannot forgive anything —not even our virtues.—Do you forgive me," he added in Madame de la Baudraye's ear, and pressing her arm to his heart with tender emphasis. And Dinah could not help smiling.

All through dinner, and for the rest of the evening, Étienne was in the most delightful spirits, inexhaustibly cheerful; but while thus giving vent to his intoxication, he now and then fell into the dreamy abstraction of a man who seems rapt in his own happiness.

After coffee had been served, Madame de la Baudraye and her mother left the men to wander about the gardens. Monsieur Gravier then remarked to Monsieur de Clagny:

"Did you observe that Madame de la Baudraye, after going out in a muslin gown came home in a velvet?"

"As she got into the carriage at Cosne, the muslin dress caught on a brass nail and was torn all the way down," replied Lousteau.

"Oh!" exclaimed Gatien, stricken to the heart by hearing two such different explanations.

The journalist, who understood, took Gatien by the arm and pressed it as a hint to him to be silent. A few minutes later Étienne left Dinah's three adorers and took possession of little La Baudraye. Then Gatien was cross-questioned as to the events of the day. Monsieur Gravier and Monsieur de Clagny were dismayed to hear that on the return from Cosne Lousteau had been alone with Dinah, and even more so on hearing the two versions explaining the lady's change of dress. And the three discomfited gentlemen were in a very awkward position for the rest of the evening.

Next day each, on various business, was obliged to leave Anzy; Dinah remained with her mother, Lousteau, and her

husband. The annoyance vented by the three victims gave rise to an organized rebellion in Sancerre. The surrender of the Muse of Le Berry, of the Nivernais, and of Morvan was the cause of a perfect hue and cry of slander, evil report, and various guesses in which the story of the muslin gown held a prominent place. No dress Dinah had ever worn had been so much commented on, or was half as interesting to the girls, who could not conceive what the connection might be, that made the married women laugh, between love and a muslin gown.

The Présidente Boirouge, furious at her son's discomfiture, forgot the praise she had lavished on the poem of *Paquita,* and fulminated terrific condemnation on the woman who could publish such a disgraceful work.

"The wretched woman commits every crime she writes about," said she. "Perhaps she will come to the same end as her heroine!"

Dinah's fate among the good folks of Sancerre was like that of Maréchal Soult in the opposition newspapers; as long as he is Minister he lost the battle of Toulouse; whenever he is out of the Government he won it! While she was virtuous, Dinah was a match for Camille de Maupin, a rival of the most famous women; but as soon as she was happy, she was an *unhappy creature.*

Monsieur de Clagny was her valiant champion; he went several times to the Château d'Anzy to acquire the right to contradict the rumors current as to the woman he still faithfully adored, even in her fall; and he maintained that she and Lousteau were engaged together on some great work. But the lawyer was laughed to scorn.

The month of October was lovely; autumn is the finest season in the valley of the Loire; but in 1836 it was unusually glorious. Nature seemed to aid and abet Dinah, who, as Bianchon had predicted, gradually developed a heart-felt passion. In one month she was an altered woman. She was surprised to find in herself so many inert and dormant qualities, hitherto in abeyance. To her Lousteau seemed an angel;

for heart-love, the crowning need of a great nature, had made a new woman of her. Dinah was alive! She had found an outlet for her powers, she saw undreamed-of vistas in the future—in short, she was happy, happy without alarms or hindrances. The vast castle, the gardens, the park, the forest, favored love.

Lousteau found in Madame de la Baudraye an artlessness, nay, if you will, an innocence of mind which made her very original; there was much more of the unexpected and winning in her than in a girl. Lousteau was quite alive to a form of flattery which in most women is assumed, but which in Dinah was genuine; she really learned from him the ways of love; he really was the first to reign in her heart. And, indeed, he took the trouble to be exceedingly amiable.

Men, like women, have a stock in hand of recitatives, of *cantabile,* of *nocturnes,* airs and refrains—shall we say of recipes, although we speak of love—which each one believes to be exclusively his own. Men who have reached Lousteau's age try to distribute the "movements" of this répertoire through the whole opera of a passion. Lousteau, regarding this adventure with Dinah as a mere temporary connection, was eager to stamp himself on her memory in indelible lines; and during that beautiful October he was prodigal of his most entrancing melodies and most elaborate *barcarolles.* In fact, he exhausted every resource of the stage management of love, to use an expression borrowed from the theatrical dictionary, and admirably descriptive of his manœuvres.

"If that woman ever forgets me!" he would sometimes say to himself as they returned together from a long walk in the woods, "I will owe her no grudge—she will have found something better."

When two beings have sung together all the duets of that enchanting score, and still love each other, it may be said that they love truly.

Lousteau, however, had not time to repeat himself, for he was to leave Anzy in the early days of November. His paper required his presence in Paris. Before breakfast, on the day

before he was to leave, the journalist and Dinah saw the master of the house come in with an artist from Nevers, who restored carvings of all kinds.

"What are you going to do?" asked Lousteau. "What is to be done to the château?"

"This is what I am going to do," said the little man, leading Lousteau, the local artist, and Dinah out on the terrace.

He pointed out, on the front of the building, a shield supported by two sirens, not unlike that which may be seen on the arcade, now closed, through which there used to be a passage from the Quai des Tuileries to the courtyard of the old Louvre, and over which the words may still be seen, *"Bibliothèque du Cabinet du Roi."* This shield bore the arms of the noble House of Uxelles, namely, Or and gules party per fess, with two lions or, dexter and sinister as supporters. Above, a knight's helm, mantled of the tincture of the shield, and surmounted by a ducal coronet. Motto, *Cy paroist!* A proud and sonorous device.

"I want to put my own coat of arms in the place of that of the Uxelles; and as they are repeated six times on the two fronts and the two wings, it is not a trifling affair."

"Your arms, so new, and since 1830!" exclaimed Dinah.

"Have I not created an entail?"

"I could understand it if you had children," said the journalist.

"Oh!" said the old man, "Madame de la Baudraye is still young; there is no time lost."

This allusion made Lousteau smile; he did not understand Monsieur de la Baudraye.

"There, Didine!" said he in Dinah's ear, "what a waste of remorse!"

Dinah begged him to give her one day more, and the lovers parted after the manner of certain theatres, which give ten last performances of a piece that is paying. And how many promises they made! How many solemn pledges did not Dinah exact and the unblushing journalist give her!

Dinah, with the superiority of the Superior Woman, ac-



companied Lousteau, in the face of all the world, as far as Cosne, with her mother and little La Baudraye. When, ten days later, Madame de la Baudraye saw in her drawing-room at La Baudraye, Monsieur de Clagny, Gatien, and Gravier, she found an opportunity of saying to each in turn:

"I owe it to Monsieur Lousteau that I discovered that I had not been loved for my own sake."

And what noble speeches she uttered, on man, on the nature of his feelings, on the end of his base passions, and so forth. Of Dinah's three worshipers, Monsieur de Clagny only said to her: "I love you, come what may"—and Dinah accepted him as her confidant, lavished on him all the marks of friendship which women can devise for the Gurths who are ready thus to wear the collar of gilded slavery.

In Paris once more, Lousteau had, in a few weeks, lost the impression of the happy time he had spent at the Château d'Anzy. This is why: Lousteau lived by his pen.

In this century, especially since the triumph of the *bourgeoisie*—the commonplace, money-saving citizen—who takes good care not to imitate Francis I. or Louis XIV.—to live by the pen is a form of penal servitude to which a galley-slave would prefer death. To live by the pen means to create—to create to-day, and to-morrow, and incessantly—or to seem to create; and the imitation costs as dear as the reality. So, besides his daily contribution to a newspaper, which was like the stone of Sisyphus, and which came every Monday, crashing down on to the feather of his pen, Étienne worked for three or four literary magazines. Still, do not be alarmed; he put no artistic conscientiousness into his work. This man of Sancerre had a facility, a carelessness, if you call it so, which ranked him with those writers who are mere scriveners, literary hacks. In Paris, in our day, hack-work cuts a man off from every pretension to a literary position. When he can do no more, or no longer cares for advancement, the man who can write becomes a journalist and a hack.

The life he leads is not unpleasing. Blue-stockings, begin-

ners in every walk of life, actresses at the outset or the close of a career, publishers and authors, all make much of these writers of the ready pen. Lousteau, a thorough man about town, lived at scarcely any expense beyond paying his rent. He had boxes at all the theatres; the sale of the books he reviewed or left unreviewed paid for his gloves; and he would say to those authors who published at their own expense, "I have your book always in my hands!" He took toll from vanity in the form of drawings or pictures. Every day had its engagements to dinner, every night its theatre, every morning was filled up with callers, visits, and lounging. His serial in the paper, two novels a year for weekly magazines, and his miscellaneous article were the tax he paid for this easy-going life. And yet, to reach this position, Étienne had struggled for ten years.

At the present time, known to the literary world, liked for the good or the mischief he did with equally facile good humor, he let himself float with the stream, never caring for the future. He ruled a little set of newcomers, he had friendships—or rather, habits of fifteen years' standing, and men with whom he supped, and dined, and indulged his wit. He earned from seven to eight hundred francs a month, a sum which he found quite insufficient for the prodigality peculiar to the impecunious. Indeed, Lousteau found himself now just as hard up as when, on first appearing in Paris, he had said to himself, "If I had but five hundred francs a month, I should be rich!"

The cause of this phenomenon was as follows: Lousteau lived in the Rue des Martyrs in pretty ground-floor rooms with a garden, and splendidly furnished. When he settled there in 1833 he had come to an agreement with an upholsterer that kept his pocket money low for a long time. These rooms were let for twelve hundred francs. The months of January, April, July, and October were, as he phrased it, his indigent months. The rent and the porter's account cleaned him out. Lousteau took no fewer hackney cabs, spent a hundred francs in breakfasts all the same, smoked thirty francs' worth of

cigars, and could never refuse the mistress of a day a dinner or a new dress. He thus dipped so deeply into the fluctuating earnings of the following months, that he could no more find a hundred francs on his chimney-piece now, when he was making seven or eight hundred francs a month, than he could in 1822, when he was hardly getting two hundred.

Tired, sometimes, by the incessant vicissitudes of a literary life, and as much bored by amusement as a courtesan, Lousteau would get out of the tideway and sit on the bank, and say to one and another of his intimate allies—Nathan or Bixiou, as they sat smoking in his scrap of garden, looking out on an evergreen lawn as big as a dinner-table:

"What will be the end of us? White hairs are giving us respectful hints!"

"Lord! we shall marry when we choose to give as much thought to the matter as we give to a drama or a novel," said Nathan.

"And Florine?" retorted Bixiou.

"Oh, we all have a Florine," said Étienne, flinging away the end of his cigar and thinking of Madame Schontz.

Madame Schontz was a pretty enough woman to put a very high price on the interest on her beauty, while reserving absolute ownership for Lousteau, the man of her heart. Like all those women who get the name in Paris of *Lorettes,* from the Church of Notre Dame de Lorette, round about which they dwell, she lived in the Rue Fléchier, a stone's throw from Lousteau. This lady took a pride and delight in teasing her friends by boasting of having a Wit for her lover.

These details of Lousteau's life and fortune are indispensable, for this penury and this bohemian existence of a man to whom Parisian luxury had become a necessity, were fated to have a cruel influence on Dinah's life. Those to whom the bohemia of Paris is familiar will now understand how it was that, by the end of a fortnight, the journalist, up to his ears in the literary environment, could laugh about his Baroness with his friends and even with Madame Schontz. To such readers as regard such doings as utterly mean, it is almost useless to make excuses which they will not accept.

"What did you do at Sancerre?" asked Bixiou the first time he met Lousteau.

"I did good service to three worthy provincials—a Receiver-General of Taxes, a little cousin of his, and a Public Prosecutor, who for ten years had been dancing round and round one of the hundred 'Tenth Muses' who adorn the Departments," said he. "But they had no more dared to touch her than we touch a decorated cream at dessert till some strong-minded person has made a hole in it."

"Poor boy!" said Bixiou. "I said you had gone to Sancerre to turn Pegasus out to grass."

"Your joke is as stupid as my Muse is handsome," retorted Lousteau. "Ask Bianchon, my dear fellow."

"A Muse and a Poet! A homœopathic cure then!" said Bixiou.

On the tenth day Lousteau received a letter with the Sancerre post-mark.

"Good! very good!" said Lousteau.

"Beloved friend, idol of my heart and soul——" twenty pages of it! all at one sitting, and dated midnight! She writes when she finds herself alone. Poor woman! Ah, ha! And a postscript—

"'I dare not ask you to write to me as I write, every day; still, I hope to have a few lines from my dear one every week, to relieve my mind.'—What a pity to burn it all! it is really well written," said Lousteau to himself, as he threw the ten sheets of paper into the fire after having read them. "That woman was born to reel off copy!"

Lousteau was not much afraid of Madame Schontz, who really loved him for himself; but he had supplanted a friend in the heart of a Marquise. This Marquise, a lady nowise coy, sometimes dropped in unexpectedly at his rooms in the evening, arriving veiled in a hackney coach; and she, as a literary woman, allowed herself to hunt through all his drawers.

A week later, Lousteau, who hardly remembered Dinah, was startled by another budget from Sancerre—eight leaves, sixteen pages! He heard a woman's step; he thought it an-

nounced a search from the Marquise, and tossed these rapturous and entrancing proofs of affection into the fire—unread!

"A woman's letter!" exclaimed Madame Schontz, as she came in. "The paper, the wax, are scented——"

"Here you are, sir," said a porter from the coach office, setting down two huge hampers in the ante-room. "Carriage paid. Please to sign my book."

"Carriage paid!" cried Madame Schontz. "It must have come from Sancerre."

"Yes, madame," said the porter.

"Your Tenth Muse is a remarkably intelligent woman," said the courtesan, opening one of the hampers, while Lousteau was writing his name. "I like a Muse who understands housekeeping, and who can make game pies as well as blots. And, oh! what beautiful flowers!" she went on, opening the second hamper. "Why, you could get none finer in Paris!—And here, and here! A hare, partridges, half a roebuck!—We will ask your friends and have a famous dinner, for Athalie has a special talent for dressing venison."

Lousteau wrote to Dinah; but instead of writing from the heart, he was clever. The letter was all the more insidious; it was like one of Mirabeau's letters to Sophie. The style of a true lover is transparent. It is a clear stream which allows the bottom of the heart to be seen between two banks, bright with the trifles of existence, and covered with the flowers of the soul that blossom afresh every day, full of intoxicating beauty—but only for two beings. As soon as a love letter has any charm for a third reader, it is beyond doubt the product of the head, not of the heart. But a woman will always be beguiled; she always believes herself to be the determining cause of this flow of wit.

By the end of December Lousteau had ceased to read Dinah's letters;, they lay in a heap in a drawer of his chest that was never locked, under his shirts, which they scented.

Then one of those chances came to Lousteau which such bohemians ought to clutch by every hair. In the middle of December, Madame Schontz, who took a real interest in

Étienne, sent to beg him to call on her one morning on business.

"My dear fellow, you have a chance of marrying."

"I can marry very often, happily, my dear."

"When I say marrying, I mean marrying well. You have no prejudices: I need not mince matters. This is the position: A young lady has got into trouble; her mother knows nothing of even a kiss. Her father is an honest notary, a man of honor; he has been wise enough to keep it dark. He wants to get his daughter married within a fortnight, and he will give her a fortune of a hundred and fifty thousand francs—for he has three other children; but—and it is not a bad idea—he will add a hundred thousand francs, under the rose, hand to hand, to cover the damages. They are an old family of Paris citizens, Rue des Lombards——"

"Well, then, why does not the lover marry her?"

"Dead."

"What a romance! Such things are nowhere to be heard of but in the Rue des Lombards."

"But do not take it into your head that a jealous brother murdered the seducer. The young man died in the most commonplace way of a pleurisy caught as he came out of the theatre. A head-clerk and penniless, the man entrapped the daughter in order to marry into the business.—A judgment from heaven, I call it!"

"Where did you hear the story?"

"From Malaga; the notary is her *milord*."

"What, Cardot, the son of that little old man in hair-powder, Florentine's first friend?"

"Just so. Malaga, whose 'fancy' is a little tomtit of a fiddler of eighteen, cannot in conscience make such a boy marry the girl. Besides, she has no cause to do him an ill turn.—Indeed, Monsieur Cardot wants a man of thirty at least. Our notary, I feel sure, will be proud to have a famous man for his son-in-law. So just feel yourself all over.—You will pay your debts, you will have twelve thousand francs a year, and be a father without any trouble on your part; what

do you say to that to the good? And, after all, you only marry a very consolable widow. There is an income of fifty thousand francs in the house, and the value of the connection, so in due time you may look forward to not less than fifteen thousand francs a year more for your share, and you will enter a family holding a fine political position; Cardot is the brother-in-law of old Camusot, the député who lived so long with Fanny Beaupré."

"Yes," said Lousteau, "old Camusot married little Daddy Cardot's eldest daughter, and they had high times together!"

"Well!" Madame Schontz went on, "and Madame Cardot, the notary's wife, was a Chiffreville—manufacturers of chemical products, the aristocracy of these days! Potash, I tell you! Still, this is the unpleasant side of the matter. You will have a terrible mother-in-law, a woman capable of killing her daughter if she knew——! This Cardot woman is a bigot; she has lips like two faded narrow pink ribbons.

"A man of the town like you would never pass muster with that woman, who, in her well-meaning way, will spy out your bachelor life and know every fact of the past. However, Cardot says he means to exert his paternal authority. The poor man will be obliged to do the civil to his wife for some days; a woman made of wood, my dear fellow; Malaga, who has seen her, calls her a penitential scrubber. Cardot is a man of forty; he will be mayor of his district, and perhaps be elected deputy. He is prepared to give in lieu of the hundred thousand francs a nice little house in the Rue Saint-Lazare, with a forecourt and a garden, which cost him no more than sixty thousand at the time of the July overthrow; he would sell, and that would be an opportunity for you to go and come at the house, to see the daughter, and be civil to the mother.—And it would give you a look of property in Madame Cardot's eyes. You would be housed like a prince in that little mansion. Then, by Camusot's interest, you may get an appointment as librarian to some public office where there is no library.—Well, and then if you invest your money in backing up a newspaper, you will get ten thousand

francs a year on it, you can earn six, your librarianship will bring you in four.—Can you do better for yourself?

"If you were to marry a lamb without spot, it might be a light woman by the end of two years. What is the damage?—an anticipated dividend! It is quite the fashion.

"Take my word for it, you can do no better than come to dine with Malaga to-morrow. You will meet your father-in-law; he will know the secret has been let out—by Malaga, with whom he cannot be angry—and then you are master of the situation. As to your wife!—Why, her misconduct leaves you as free as a bachelor——"

"Your language is as blunt as a cannon ball."

"I love you for your own sake, that is all—and I can reason. Well! why do you stand there like a wax image of Abd-el-Kader? There is nothing to meditate over. Marriage is heads or tails—well, you have tossed heads up."

"You shall have my reply to-morrow," said Lousteau.

"I would sooner have it at once; Malaga will write you up to-night."

"Well, then, yes."

Lousteau spent the evening in writing a long letter to the Marquise, giving her the reasons which compelled him to marry: his constant poverty, the torpor of his imagination, his white hairs, his moral and physical exhaustion—in short, four pages of arguments.—"As to Dinah, I will send her a circular announcing the marriage," said he to himself. "As Bixiou says, I have not my match for knowing how to dock the tail of a passion."

Lousteau, who at first had been on some ceremony with himself, by next day had come to the point of dreading lest the marriage should not come off. He was pressingly civil to the notary.

"I knew monsieur your father," said he, "at Florentine's, so I may well know you here, at Mademoiselle Turquet's. Like father, like son. A very good fellow and a philosopher, was little Daddy Cardot—excuse me, we always called him so. At that time, Florine, Florentine, Tullia, Coralie, and

Mariette were the five fingers of your hand, so to speak—it is fifteen years ago. My follies, as you may suppose, are a thing of the past.—In those days it was pleasure that ran away with me; now I am ambitious; but, in our day, to get on at all a man must be free from debt, have a good income, a wife, and a family. If I pay taxes enough to qualify me, I may be a deputy yet, like any other man."

Maître Cardot appreciated this profession of faith. Lousteau had laid himself out to please, and the notary liked him, feeling himself more at his ease, as may be easily imagined, with a man who had known his father's secrets than he would have been with another. On the following day Lousteau was introduced to the Cardot family as the purchaser of the house in the Rue Saint-Lazare, and three days later he dined there.

Cardot lived in an old house near the Place du Châtelet. In this house everything was "good." Economy covered every scrap of gilding with green gauze; all the furniture wore holland covers. Though it was impossible to feel a shade of uneasiness as to the wealth of the inhabitants, at the end of half an hour no one could suppress a yawn. Boredom perched in every nook; the curtains hung dolefully; the dining-room was like Harpagon's. Even if Lousteau had not known all about Malaga, he could have guessed that the notary's real life was spent elsewhere.

The journalist saw a tall, fair girl with blue eyes, at once shy and languishing. The elder brother took a fancy to him; he was the fourth clerk in the office, but strongly attracted by the snares of literary fame, though destined to succeed his father. The younger sister was twelve years old. Lousteau, assuming a little Jesuitical air, played the Monarchist and Churchman for the benefit of the mother, was quite smooth, deliberate, and complimentary.

Within three weeks of their introduction, at his fourth dinner there, Félicie Cardot, who had been watching Lousteau out of the corner of her eye, carried him a cup of coffee where he stood in the window recess, and said in a low voice, with tears in her eyes:

"I will devote my whole life, monsieur, to thanking you for your sacrifice in favor of a poor girl——"

Lousteau was touched; there was so much expression in her look, her accent, her attitude. "She would make a good man happy," thought he, pressing her hand in reply.

Madame Cardot looked upon her son-in-law as a man with a future before him; but, above all the fine qualities she ascribed to him, she was most delighted by his high tone of morals. Étienne, prompted by the wily notary, had pledged his word that he had no natural children, no tie that could endanger the happiness of her dear Félicie.

"You may perhaps think I go rather too far," said the bigot to the journalist; "but in giving such a jewel as my Félicie to any man, one must think of the future. I am not one of those mothers who want to be rid of their daughters. Monsieur Cardot hurries matters on, urges forward his daughter's marriage; he wishes it over. This is the only point on which we differ.—Though with a man like you, monsieur, a literary man whose youth has been preserved by hard work from the moral shipwreck now so prevalent, we may feel quite safe; still, you would be the first to laugh at me if I looked for a husband for my daughter with my eyes shut. I know you are not an innocent, and I should be very sorry for my Félicie if you were" (this was said in a whisper); "but if you had any *liaison*—For instance, monsieur, you have heard of Madame Roguin, the wife of a notary who, unhappily for our faculty, was sadly notorious. Madame Roguin has, ever since 1820, been kept by a banker——"

"Yes, du Tillet," replied Étienne; but he bit his tongue as he recollected how rash it was to confess to an acquaintance with du Tillet.

"Yes.—Well, monsieur, if you were a mother, would you not quake at the thought that Madame du Tillet's fate might be your child's? At her age, and *née* de Granville! To have as a rival a woman of fifty and more. Sooner would I see my daughter dead than give her to a man who had such a connection with a married woman. A grisette, an actress,

you take her and leave her.—There is no danger, in my opinion, from women of that stamp; love is their trade, they care for no one, one down and another to come on!—But a woman who has sinned against duty must hug her sin, her only excuse is constancy, if such a crime can ever have an excuse. At least, that is the view I hold of a respectable woman's fall, and that is what makes it so terrible——"

Instead of looking for the meaning of these speeches, Étienne made a jest of them at Malaga's, whither he went with his father-in-law elect; for the notary and the journalist were the best of friends.

Lousteau had already given himself the airs of a person of importance; his life at last was to have a purpose; he was in luck's way, and in a few days would be the owner of a delightful little house in the Rue Saint-Lazare; he was going to be married to a charming woman, he would have about twenty thousand francs a year, and could give the reins to his ambition; the young lady loved him, and he would be connected with several respectable families. In short, he was in full sail on the blue waters of hope.

Madame Cardot had expressed a wish to see the prints for *Gil Blas,* one of the illustrated volumes which the French publishers were at that time bringing out, and Lousteau had taken the first numbers for the lady's inspection. The lawyer's wife had a scheme of her own, she had borrowed the book merely to return it; she wanted an excuse for walking in on her future son-in-law quite unexpectedly. The sight of those bachelor rooms, which her husband had described as charming, would tell her more, she thought, as to Lousteau's habits of life than any information she could pick up. Her sister-in-law, Madame Camusot, who knew nothing of the fateful secret, was terrified at such a marriage for her niece. Monsieur Camusot, a Councillor of the Supreme Court, old Camusot's son by his first marriage, had given his stepmother, who was Cardot's sister, a far from flattering account of the journalist.

Lousteau, clever as he was, did not think it strange that the wife of a rich notary should wish to inspect a volume costing fifteen francs before deciding on the purchase. Your clever man never condescends to study the middle-class, who escape his ken by this want of attention; and while he is making game of them, they are at leisure to throttle him.

So one day early in January 1837, Madame Cardot and her daughter took a hackney coach and went to the Rue des Martyrs to return the parts of *Gil Blas* to Félicie's betrothed, both delighted at the thought of seeing Lousteau's rooms. These domiciliary visitations are not unusual in the old citizen class. The porter at the front gate was not in; but his daughter, on being informed by the worthy lady that she was in the presence of Monsieur Lousteau's future mother-in-law and bride, handed over the key of the apartment—all the more readily because Madame Cardot placed a gold piece in her hand.

It was by this time about noon, the hour at which the journalist would return from breakfasting at the Café Anglais. As he crossed the open space between the Church of Notre-Dame de Lorette and the Rue des Martyrs, Lousteau happened to look at a hired coach that was toiling up the Rue du Faubourg-Montmartre, and he fancied it was a dream when he saw the face of Dinah! He stood frozen to the spot when, on reaching his house, he beheld his Didine at the coach door.

"What has brought you here?" he inquired.—He adopted the familiar *tu*. The formality of *vous* was out of the question to a woman he must get rid of.

"Why, my love," cried she, "have you not read my letters?"

"Certainly I have," said Lousteau.

"Well, then?"

"Well, then?"

"You are a father," replied the country lady.

"Faugh!" cried he, disregarding the barbarity of such an exclamation. "Well," thought he to himself, "she must be prepared for the blow."

He signed to the coachman to wait, gave his hand to Ma-

dame de la Baudraye, and left the man with the chaise full of trunks, vowing that he would send away *illico,* as he said to himself, the woman and her luggage, back to the place she had come from.

"Monsieur, monsieur," called out little Pamela.

The child had some sense, and felt that three women must not be allowed to meet in a bachelor's rooms.

"Well, well!" said Lousteau, dragging Dinah along.

Pamela concluded that the lady must be some relation; however, she added:

"The key is in the door; your mother-in-law is there."

In his agitation, while Madame de la Baudraye was pouring out a flood of words, Étienne understood the child to say, "Mother is there," the only circumstance that suggested itself as possible, and he went in.

Félicie and her mother, who were by this time in the bedroom, crept into a corner on seeing Étienne enter with a woman.

"At last, Étienne, my dearest, I am yours for life!" cried Dinah, throwing her arms round his neck, and clasping him closely, while he took the key from the outside of the door. "Life was a perpetual anguish to me in that house at Anzy. I could bear it no longer; and when the time came for me to proclaim my happiness—well, I had not the courage.—Here I am, your wife with your child! And you have not written to me; you have left me two months without a line."

"But, Dinah, you place me in the greatest difficulty——"

"Do you love me?"

"How can I do otherwise than love you?—But would you not have been wiser to remain at Sancerre?—I am in the most abject poverty, and I fear to drag you into it——"

"Your misery will be paradise to me. I only ask to live here, never to go out——"

"Good God! that is all very fine in words, but——" Dinah sat down and melted into tears as she heard this speech, roughly spoken.

Lousteau could not resist this distress. He clasped the Baroness in his arms and kissed her.

"Do not cry, Didine!" said he; and, as he uttered the words, he saw in the mirror the figure of Madame Cardot, looking at him from the further end of the rooms. "Come, Didine, go with Pamela and get your trunks unloaded," said he in her ear. "Go; do not cry; we will be happy!"

He led her to the door, and then came back to divert the storm.

"Monsieur," said Madame Cardot, "I congratulate myself on having resolved to see for myself the home of the man who was to have been my son-in-law. If my daughter were to die of it, she should never be the wife of such a man as you. You must devote yourself to making your Didine happy, monsieur."

And the virtuous lady walked out, followed by Félicie, who was crying too, for she had become accustomed to Étienne. The dreadful Madame Cardot got into her hackney-coach again, staring insolently at the hapless Dinah, in whose heart the sting still rankled of "that is all very fine in words"; but who, nevertheless, like every woman in love, believed in the murmured, "Do not cry, Didine!"

Lousteau, who was not lacking in the sort of decision which grows out of the vicissitudes of a storm-tossed life, reflected thus:

"Didine is high-minded; when once she knows of my proposed marriage, she will sacrifice herself for my future prospects, and I know how I can manage to let her know." Delighted at having hit on a trick of which the success seemed certain, he danced round to a familiar tune:

"*Larifla, fla, fla!*—And Didine once out of the way," he went on, talking to himself, "I will treat Maman Cardot to a call and a novelette: I have seduced her Félicie at Saint-Eustache—Félicie, guilty through passion, bears in her bosom the pledge of our affection—and *larifla, fla, fla!* The father cannot give me the lie, *fla, fla*—no, nor the girl—*larifla!*—*Ergo,* the notary, his wife, and his daughter are caught, nabbed——"

And, to her great amazement, Dinah discovered Étienne performing a prohibited dance.

"Your arrival and our happiness have turned my head with joy," said he, to explain this crazy mood.

"And I had fancied you had ceased to love me!" exclaimed the poor woman, dropping the handbag she was carrying, and weeping with joy as she sank into a chair.

"Make yourself at home, my darling," said Étienne, laughing in his sleeve; "I must write two lines to excuse myself from a bachelor party, for I mean to devote myself to you. Give your orders; you are at home."

Étienne wrote to Bixiou:

"My dear Boy,—My Baroness has dropped into my arms, and will be fatal to my marriage unless we perform one of the most familiar stratagems of the thousand and one comedies at the Gymnase. I rely on you to come here, like one of Molière's old men, to scold your nephew Léandre for his folly, while the Tenth Muse lies hidden in my bedroom; you must work on her feelings; strike hard, be brutal, offensive. I, you understand, shall express my blind devotion, and shall seem to be deaf, so that you may have to shout at me.

"Come, if you can, at seven o'clock.

"Yours,

"É. Lousteau."

Having sent this letter by a commissionaire to the man who, in all Paris, most delighted in such practical jokes—in the slang of artists, a *"charge"*—Lousteau made a great show of settling the Muse of Sancerre in his apartment. He busied himself in arranging the luggage she had brought, and informed her as to the persons and ways of the house with such perfect good faith, and a glee which overflowed in kind words and caresses, that Dinah believed herself the best-beloved woman in the world. These rooms, where everything bore the stamp of fashion, pleased her far better than her old château.

Pamela Migeon, the intelligent damsel of fourteen, was questioned by the journalist as to whether she would like to be waiting-maid to the imposing Baroness. Pamela, perfectly

enchanted, entered on her duties at once, by going off to order dinner from a restaurant on the boulevard. Dinah was able to judge of the extreme poverty that lay hidden under the purely superficial elegance of this bachelor home when she found none of the necessaries of life. As she took possession of the closets and drawers, she indulged in the fondest dreams; she would alter Étienne's habits, she would make him home-keeping, she would fill his cup of domestic happiness.

The novelty of the position hid its disastrous side; Dinah regarded reciprocated love as the absolution of her sin; she did not yet look beyond the walls of these rooms. Pamela, whose wits were as sharp as those of a *lorette,* went straight to Madame Schontz to beg the loan of some plate, telling her what had happened to Lousteau. After making the child welcome to all she had, Madame Schontz went off to her friend Malaga, that Cardot might be warned of the catastrophe that had befallen his future son-in-law.

The journalist, not in the least uneasy about the crisis as affecting his marriage, was more and more charming to the lady from the provinces. The dinner was the occasion of the delightful child's-play of lovers set at liberty, and happy to be free. When they had had their coffee, and Lousteau was sitting in front of the fire, Dinah on his knee, Pamela ran in with a scared face.

"Here is Monsieur Bixiou!" said she.

"Go into the bedroom," said the journalist to his mistress; "I will soon get rid of him. He is one of my most intimate friends, and I shall have to explain to him my new start in life."

"Oh, ho! dinner for two, and a blue velvet bonnet!" cried Bixiou. "I am off.—Ah! that is what comes of marrying—one must go through some partings. How rich one feels when one begins to move one's sticks, heh?"

"Who talks of marrying?" said Lousteau.

"What! are you not going to be married, then?" cried Bixiou.

"No!"

"No? My word, what next? Are you making a fool of yourself, if you please?—What!—You, who, by the mercy of Heaven, have come across twenty thousand francs a year, and a house, and a wife connected with all the first families of the better middle class—a wife, in short, out of the Rue des Lombards——"

"That will do, Bixiou, enough; it is at an end. Be off!"

"Be off? I have a friend's privileges, and I shall take every advantage of them.—What has come over you?"

"What has 'come over' me is my lady from Sancerre. She is a mother, and we are going to live together happily to the end of our days.—You would have heard it to-morrow, so you may as well be told it now."

"Many chimney-pots are falling on my head, as Arnal says. But if this woman really loves you, my dear fellow, she will go back to the place she came from. Did any provincial woman ever yet find her sea-legs in Paris? She will wound all your vanities. Have you forgotten what a provincial is? She will bore you as much when she is happy as when she is sad; she will have as great a talent for escaping grace as a Parisian has in inventing it.

"Lousteau, listen to me. That a passion should lead you to forget to some extent the times in which we live, is conceivable; but I, my dear fellow, have not the mythological bandage over my eyes.—Well, then, consider your position. For fifteen years you have been tossing in the literary world; you are no longer young, you have padded the hoof till your soles are worn through!—Yes, my boy, you turn your socks under like a street urchin to hide the holes, so that the legs cover the heels! In short, the joke is too stale. Your excuses are more familiar than a patent medicine——"

"I may say to you, like the Regent to Cardinal Dubois, 'That is kicking enough!'" said Lousteau, laughing.

"Oh, venerable young man," replied Bixiou, "the iron has touched the sore to the quick. You are worn out, aren't you? Well, then; in the heyday of youth, under the pressure of

penury, what have you done? You are not in the front rank, and you have not a thousand francs of your own. That is the sum-total of the situation. Can you, in the decline of your powers, support a family by your pen, when your wife, if she is an honest woman, will not have at her command the resources of the woman of the streets, who can extract her thousand-franc note from the depths where milord keeps it safe? You are rushing into the lowest depths of the social theatre.

"And this is only the financial side. Now, consider the political position. We are struggling in an essentially *bourgeois* age, in which honor, virtue, high-mindedness, talent, learning—genius, in short—is summed up in paying your way, owing nobody anything, and conducting your affairs with judgment. Be steady, be respectable, have a wife and children, pay your rent and taxes, serve in the National Guard, and be on the same pattern as all the men of your company—then you may indulge in the loftiest pretensions, rise to the Ministry!—And you have the best chances possible, since you are no Montmorency. You were preparing to fulfil all the conditions insisted on for turning out a political personage, you are capable of every mean trick that is necessary in office, even of pretending to be commonplace—you would have acted it to the life. And just for a woman, who will leave you in the lurch—the end of every eternal passion—in three, five, or seven years—after exhausting your last physical and intellectual powers, you turn your back on the sacred Hearth, on the Rue des Lombards, on a political career, on thirty thousand francs per annum, on respectability and respect!—Ought that to be the end of a man who has done with illusions?

"If you had kept a pot boiling for some actress who gave you your fun for it—well; that is what you may call a cabinet matter. But to live with another man's wife? It is a draft at sight on disaster; it is bolting the bitter pills of vice with none of the gilding."

"That will do. One word answers it all; I love Madame

de la Baudraye, and prefer her to every fortune, to every position the world can offer.—I may have been carried away by a gust of ambition, but everything must give way to the joy of being a father."

"Ah, ha! you have a fancy for paternity? But, wretched man, we are the fathers only of our legitimate children. What is a brat that does not bear your name? The last chapter of the romance.—Your child will be taken from you! We have seen that story in twenty plays these ten years past.

"Society, my dear boy, will drop upon you sooner or later. Read *Adolphe* once more.—Dear me! I fancy I can see you when you and she are used to each other;—I see you dejected, hang-dog, bereft of position and fortune, and fighting like the shareholders of a bogus company when they are tricked by a director!—Your director is happiness."

"Say no more, Bixiou."

"But I have only just begun," said Bixiou. "Listen, my dear boy. Marriage has been out of favor for some time past; but, apart from the advantages it offers in being the only recognized way of certifying heredity, as it affords a good-looking young man, though penniless, the opportunity of making his fortune in two months, it survives in spite of disadvantages. And there is not the man living who would not repent, sooner or later, of having, by his own fault, lost the chance of marrying thirty thousand francs a year."

"You won't understand me," cried Lousteau, in a voice of exasperation. "Go away—she is there——"

"I beg your pardon; why did you not tell me sooner?—You are of age, and so is she," he added in a lower voice, but loud enough to be heard by Dinah. "She will make you repent bitterly of your happiness!——"

"If it is a folly, I intend to commit it.—Good-bye."

"A man gone overboard!" cried Bixiou.

"Devil take those friends who think they have a right to preach to you," said Lousteau, opening the door of the bedroom, where he found Madame de la Baudraye sunk in an armchair and dabbing her eyes with an embroidered handkerchief.

"Oh, why did I come here?" sobbed she. "Good Heavens, why indeed?—Étienne, I am not so provincial as you think me.—You are making a fool of me."

"Darling angel," replied Lousteau, taking Dinah in his arms, lifting her from her chair, and dragging her half dead into the drawing-room, "we have both pledged our future, it is sacrifice for sacrifice. While I was loving you at Sancerre, they were engaging me to be married here, but I refused.—Oh! I was extremely distressed——"

"I am going," cried Dinah, starting wildly to her feet and turning to the door.

"You will stay here, my Didine. All is at an end. And is this fortune so lightly earned after all? Must I not marry a gawky, tow-haired creature, with a red nose, the daughter of a notary, and saddle myself with a stepmother who could give Madame de Piédefer points on the score of bigotry——"

Pamela flew in, and whispered in Lousteau's ear:

"Madame Schontz!"

Lousteau rose, leaving Dinah on the sofa, and went out.

"It is all over with you, my dear," said the woman. "Cardot does not mean to quarrel with his wife for the sake of a son-in-law. The lady made a scene—something like a scene, I can tell you! So, to conclude, the head-clerk, who was the late head-clerk's deputy for two years, agrees to take the girl with the business."

"Mean wretch!" exclaimed Lousteau. "What! in two hours he has made up his mind?"

"Bless me, that is simple enough. The rascal, who knew all the dead man's little secrets, guessed what a fix his master was in from overhearing a few words of the squabble with Madame Cardot. The notary relies on your honor and good feeling, for the affair is settled. The clerk, whose conduct has been admirable, went so far as to attend mass! A finished hyprocrite, I say—just suits the mamma. You and Cardot will still be friends. He is to be a director in an immense financial concern, and he may be of use to you.—So you have been waked from a sweet dream."

"I have lost a fortune, a wife, and——"

"And a mistress," said Madame Schontz, smiling. "Here you are, more than married; you will be insufferable, you will be always wanting to get home, there will be nothing loose about you, neither your clothes nor your habits. And, after all, my Arthur does things in style. I will be faithful to him and cut Malaga's acquaintance.

"Let me peep at her through the door—your Sancerre Muse," she went on. "Is there no finer bird than that to be found in the desert?" she exclaimed. "You are cheated! She is dignified, lean, lachrymose; she only needs Lady Dudley's turban!"

"What is it now?" asked Madame de la Baudraye, who had heard the rustle of a silk dress and the murmur of a woman's voice.

"It is, my darling, that we are now indissolubly united.—I have just had an answer to the letter you saw me write, which was to break off my marriage——"

"So that was the party which you gave up?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I will be more than your wife—I am your slave, I give you my life," said the poor deluded creature. "I did not believe I could love you more than I did!—Now I shall not be a mere incident, but your whole life?"

"Yes, my beautiful, my generous Didine."

"Swear to me," said she, "that only death shall divide us."

Lousteau was ready to sweeten his vows with the most fascinating prettinesses. And this was why. Between the door of the apartment where he had taken the lorette's farewell kiss, and that of the drawing-room, where the Muse was reclining, bewildered by such a succession of shocks, Lousteau had remembered little De la Baudraye's precarious health, his fine fortune, and Bianchon's remark about Dinah, "She will be a rich widow!" and he said to himself, "I would a hundred times rather have Madame de la Baudraye for a wife than Félicie!"

His plan of action was quickly decided on; he determined

to play the farce of passion once more, and to perfection. His mean self-interest and his false vehemence of passion had disastrous results. Madame de la Baudraye, when she set out from Sancerre for Paris, had intended to live in rooms of her own quite near to Lousteau; but the proofs of devotion her lover had given her by giving up such brilliant prospects, and yet more the perfect happiness of the first days of their illicit union, kept her from mentioning such a parting. The second day was to be—and indeed was—a high festival, in which such a suggestion proposed to "her angel" would have been a discordant note.

Lousteau, on his part, anxious to make Dinah feel herself dependent on him, kept her in a state of constant intoxication by incessant amusement. These circumstances hindered two persons so clever as these were from avoiding the slough into which they fell—that of a life in common, a piece of folly of which, unfortunately, many instances may be seen in Paris in literary circles.

And thus was the whole programme played out of a provincial amour, so satirically described by Lousteau to Madame de la Baudraye—a fact which neither he nor she remembered. Passion is born a deaf-mute.

This winter in Paris was to Madame de la Baudraye all that the month of October had been at Sancerre. Étienne, to initiate "his wife" into Paris life, varied this honeymoon by evenings at the play, where Dinah would only go to the stage box. At first Madame de la Baudraye preserved some remnants of her countrified modesty; she was afraid of being seen; she hid her happiness. She would say:

"Monsieur de Clagny or Monsieur Gravier may have followed me to Paris." She was afraid of Sancerre even in Paris.

Lousteau, who was excessively vain, educated Dinah, took her to the best dressmakers, and pointed out to her the most fashionable women, advising her to take them as models for imitation. And Madame de la Baudraye's provincial appear-

ance was soon a thing of the past. Lousteau, when his friends met him, was congratulated on his conquest.

All through that season Étienne wrote little and got very much into debt, though Dinah, who was proud, bought all her clothes out of her savings, and fancied she had not been the smallest expense to her beloved. By the end of three months Dinah was acclimatized; she had reveled in the music at the Italian opera; she knew the pieces "on" at all theatres, and the actors and jests of the day; she had become inured to this life of perpetual excitement, this rapid torrent in which everything is forgotten. She no longer craned her neck or stood with her nose in the air, like an image of Amazement, at the constant surprises that Paris has for a stranger. She had learned to breathe that witty, vitalizing, teeming atmosphere where clever people feel themselves in their element, and which they can no longer bear to quit.

One morning, as she read the papers, for Lousteau had them all, two lines carried her back to Sancerre and the past, two lines that seemed not unfamiliar—as follows:

"Monsieur le Baron de Clagny, Public Prosecutor to the Criminal Court at Sancerre, has been appointed Deputy Public Prosecutor to the Supreme Court in Paris."

"How well that worthy lawyer loves you!" said the journalist, smiling.

"Poor man!" said she. "What did I tell you? He is following me."

Étienne and Dinah were just then at the most dazzling and fervid stage of a passion when each is perfectly accustomed to the other, and yet love has not lost its freshness and relish. The lovers know each other well, but all is not yet understood; they have not been a second time to the same secret haunts of the soul; they have not studied each other till they know, as they must later, the very thought, word, and gesture that responds to every event, the greatest and the smallest. Enchantment reigns; there are no collisions, no differences of opinion, no cold looks. Their two souls are always on the same side. And Dinah would speak the magical

words, emphasized by the yet more magical expression and looks which every woman can use under such circumstances.

"When you cease to love me, kill me.—If you should cease to love me, I believe I could kill you first and myself after."

To this sweet exaggeration, Lousteau would reply:

"All I ask of God is to see you as constant as I shall be. It is you who will desert me!"

"My love is supreme."

"Supreme," echoed Lousteau. "Come, now? Suppose I am dragged away to a bachelor party, and find there one of my former mistresses, and she makes fun of me; I, out of vanity, behave as if I were free, and do not come in here till next morning—would you still love me?"

"A woman is only sure of being loved when she is preferred; and if you came back to me, if—— Oh! you make me understand what the happiness would be of forgiving the man I adore."

"Well, then, I am truly loved for the first time in my life!" cried Lousteau.

"At last you understand that!" said she.

Lousteau proposed that they should each write a letter setting forth the reasons which would compel them to end by suicide. Once in possession of such a document, each might kill the other without danger in case of infidelity. But in spite of mutual promises, neither wrote the letter.

The journalist, happy for the moment, promised himself that he would deceive Dinah when he should be tired of her, and would sacrifice everything to the requirements of that deception. To him Madame de la Baudraye was a fortune in herself. At the same time, he felt the yoke.

Dinah, by consenting to this union, showed a generous mind and the power derived from self-respect. In this absolute intimacy, in which both lovers put off their masks, the young woman never abdicated her modesty, her masculine rectitude, and the strength peculiar to ambitious souls, which formed the basis of her character. Lousteau involuntarily held her in high esteem. As a Parisian, Dinah was superior

to the most fascinating courtesan; she could be as amusing and as witty as Malaga; but her extensive information, her habits of mind, her vast reading enabled her to generalize her wit, while the Florines and the Schontzes exerted theirs over a very narrow circle.

"There is in Dinah," said Étienne to Bixiou, "the stuff to make both a Ninon and a De Staël."

"A woman who combines an encyclopædia and a seraglio is very dangerous," replied the mocking spirit.

When the expected infant became a visible fact, Madame de la Baudraye would be seen no more; but before shutting herself up, never to go out unless into the country, she was bent on being present at the first performance of a play by Nathan. This literary solemnity occupied the minds of the two thousand persons who regard themselves as constituting "all Paris." Dinah, who had never been at a first night's performance, was very full of natural curiosity. She had by this time arrived at such a pitch of affection for Lousteau that she gloried in her misconduct; she exerted a sort of savage strength to defy the world; she was determined to look it in the face without turning her head aside.

She dressed herself to perfection, in a style suited to her delicate looks and the sickly whiteness of her face. Her pallid complexion gave her an expression of refinement, and her black hair in smooth bands enhanced her pallor. Her brilliant gray eyes looked finer than ever, set in dark rings. But a terribly distressing incident awaited her. By a very simple chance, the box given to the journalist, on the first tier, was next to that which Anna Grossetête had taken. The two intimate friends did not even bow; neither chose to acknowledge the other. At the end of the first act Lousteau left his seat, abandoning Dinah to the fire of eyes, the glare of opera-glasses; while the Baronne de Fontaine and the Comtesse Marie de Vandenesse, who accompanied her, received some of the most distinguished men of fashion.

Dinah's solitude was all the more distressing because she had not the art of putting a good face to the matter by exam-

ining the company through her opera-glass. In vain did she try to assume a dignified and thoughtful attitude, and fix her eyes on vacancy; she was overpoweringly conscious of being the object of general attention; she could not disguise her discomfort, and lapsed a little into provincialism, displaying her handkerchief and making involuntary movements of which she had almost cured herself. At last, between the second and third acts, a man had himself admitted to Dinah's box! It was Monsieur de Clagny.

"I am happy to see you, to tell you how much I am pleased by your promotion," said she.

"Oh! Madame, for whom should I come to Paris——?"

"What!" said she. "Have I anything to do with your appointment?"

"Everything," said he. "Since you left Sancerre, it had become intolerable to me; I was dying——"

"Your sincere friendship does me good," replied she, holding out her hand. "I am in a position to make much of my true friends; I now know their value.—I feared I must have lost your esteem, but the proof you have given me by this visit touches me more deeply than your ten years' attachment."

"You are an object of curiosity to the whole house," said the lawyer. "Oh! my dear, is this a part for you to be playing? Could you not be happy and yet remain honored?—I have just heard that you are Monsieur Étienne Lousteau's mistress, that you live together as man and wife!—You have broken for ever with society; even if you should some day marry your lover, the time will come when you will feel the want of the respectability you now despise. Ought you not to be in a home of your own with your mother, who loves you well enough to protect you with her ægis?—Appearances at least would be saved."

"I am in the wrong to have come here," replied she, "that is all.—I have bid farewell to all the advantages which the world confers on women who know how to reconcile happiness and the proprieties. My abnegation is so complete that I only wish I could clear a vast space about me to make a

desert of my love, full of God, of *him,* and of myself.—We have made too many sacrifices on both sides not to be united—united by disgrace if you will, but indissolubly one. I am happy; so happy that I can love freely, my friend, and confide in you more than of old—for I need a friend."

The lawyer was magnanimous, nay, truly great. To this declaration, in which Dinah's soul thrilled, he replied in heartrending tones:

"I wanted to go to see you, to be sure that you were loved: I shall now be easy and no longer alarmed as to your future.—But will your lover appreciate the magnitude of your sacrifice; is there any gratitude in his affection?"

"Come to the Rue des Martyrs and you will see!"

"Yes, I will call," he replied. "I have already passed your door without daring to inquire for you.—You do not yet know the literary world. There are glorious exceptions, no doubt; but these men of letters drag terrible evils in their train; among these I account publicity as one of the greatest, for it blights everything. A woman may commit herself with——"

"With a Public Prosecutor?" the Baronne put in with a smile.

"Well!—and then after a rupture there is still something to fall back on; the world has known nothing. But with a more or less famous man the public is thoroughly informed. Why, look there! What an example you have close at hand! You are sitting back to back with the Comtesse Marie Vandenesse, who was within an ace of committing the utmost folly for a more celebrated man than Lousteau—for Nathan—and now they do not even recognize each other. After going to the very edge of the precipice, the Countess was saved, no one knows how; she neither left her husband nor her house; but as a famous man was concerned, she was the talk of the town for a whole winter. But for her husband's great fortune, great name, and high position, but for the admirable management of that true statesman—whose conduct to his wife, they say, was perfect—she would have been ruined; in

her position no other woman would have remained respected as she is."

"And how was Sancerre when you came away?" asked Madame de la Baudraye, to change the subject.

"Monsieur de la Baudraye announced that your expected confinement after so many years made it necessary that it should take place in Paris, and that he had insisted on your going to be attended by the first physicians," replied Monsieur de Clagny, guessing what it was that Dinah most wanted to know. "And so, in spite of the commotion to which your departure gave rise, you still have your legal status."

"Why!" she exclaimed, "can Monsieur de la Baudraye still hope——"

"Your husband, madame, did what he always does—made a little calculation."

The lawyer left the box when the journalist returned, bowing with dignity.

"You are a greater hit than the piece," said Étienne to Dinah.

This brief triumph brought greater happiness to the poor woman than she had ever known in the whole of her provincial existence; still, as they left the theatre she was very grave.

"What ails you, my Didine?" asked Lousteau.

"I am wondering how a woman succeeds in conquering the world?"

"There are two ways. One is by being Madame de Staël, the other is by having two hundred thousand francs a year."

"Society," said she, "asserts its hold on us by appealing to our vanity, our love of appearances.—Pooh! We will be philosophers!"

That evening was the last gleam of the delusive well-being in which Madame de la Baudraye had lived since coming to Paris. Three days later she observed a cloud on Lousteau's brow as he walked round the little garden-plot smoking a cigar. This woman, who had acquired from her husband the

habit and the pleasure of never owing anybody a sou, was informed that the household was penniless, with two quarters' rent owing, and on the eve, in fact, of an execution.

This reality of Paris life pierced Dinah's heart like a thorn; she repented of having tempted Étienne into the extravagances of love. It is so difficult to pass from pleasure to work, that happiness has wrecked more poems than sorrows ever helped to flow in sparkling jets. Dinah, happy in seeing Étienne taking his ease, smoking a cigar after breakfast, his face beaming as he basked like a lizard in the sunshine, could not summon up courage enough to make herself the bum-bailiff of a magazine.

It struck her that through the worthy Migeon, Pamela's father, she might pawn the few jewels she possessed, on which her "uncle," for she was learning to talk the slang of the town, advanced her nine hundred francs. She kept three hundred for her baby-clothes and the expenses of her illness, and joyfully presented the sum due to Lousteau, who was ploughing, furrow by furrow, or, if you will, line by line, through a novel for a periodical.

"Dearest heart," said she, "finish your novel without making any sacrifice to necessity; polish the style, work up the subject.—I have played the fine lady too long; I am going to be the housewife and attend to business."

For the last four months Étienne had been taking Dinah to the Café Riche to dine every day, a corner being always kept for them. The countrywoman was in dismay at being told that five hundred francs were owing for the last fortnight.

"What! we have been drinking wine at six francs a bottle! A sole *Normande* costs five francs!—and twenty centimes for a roll?" she exclaimed, as she looked through the bill Lousteau showed her.

"Well, it makes very little difference to us whether we are robbed at a restaurant or by a cook," said Lousteau.

"Henceforth, for the cost of your dinner, you shall live like a prince."

Having induced the landlord to let her have a kitchen and two servants' rooms, Madame de la Baudraye wrote a few lines to her mother, begging her to send her some linen and a loan of a thousand francs. She received two trunks full of linen, some plate, and two thousand francs, sent by the hand of an honest and pious cook recommended her by her mother.

Ten days after the evening at the theatre when they had met, Monsieur de Clagny came to call at four o'clock, after coming out of court, and found Madame de la Baudraye making a little cap. The sight of this proud and ambitious woman, whose mind was so accomplished, and who had queened it so well at the Château d'Anzy, now condescending to household cares and sewing for the coming infant, moved the poor lawyer, who had just left the bench. And as he saw the pricks on one of the taper fingers he had so often kissed, he understood that Madame de la Baudraye was not merely playing at this maternal task.

In the course of this first interview the magistrate saw to the depths of Dinah's soul. This perspicacity in a man so much in love was a superhuman effort. He saw that Didine meant to be the journalist's guardian spirit and lead him into a nobler road; she had seen that the difficulties of his practical life were due to some moral defects. Between two beings united by love—in one so genuine, and in the other so well feigned—more than one confidence had been exchanged in the course of four months. Notwithstanding the care with which Étienne wrapped up his true self, a word now and then had not failed to enlighten Dinah as to the previous life of a man whose talents were so hampered by poverty, so perverted by bad examples, so thwarted by obstacles beyond his courage to surmount. "He will be a greater man if life is easy to him," said she to herself. And she strove to make him happy, to give him the sense of a sheltered home by dint of such economy and method as are familiar to provincial folks. Thus Dinah became a housekeeper, as she had become a poet, by the soaring of her soul towards the heights.

"His happiness will be my absolution."

These words, wrung from Madame de la Baudraye by her

friend the lawyer, accounted for the existing state of things. The publicity of his triumph, flaunted by Étienne on the evening of the first performance, had very plainly shown the lawyer what Lousteau's purpose was. To Étienne, Madame de la Baudraye was, to use his own phrase, "a fine feather in his cap." Far from preferring the joys of a shy and mysterious passion, of hiding such exquisite happiness from the eyes of the world, he found a vulgar satisfaction in displaying the first woman of respectability who had ever honored him with her affection.

The Judge, however, was for some time deceived by the attentions which any man would lavish on any woman in Madame de la Baudraye's situation, and Lousteau made them doubly charming by the ingratiating ways characteristic of men whose manners are naturally attractive. There are, in fact, men who have something of the monkey in them by nature, and to whom the assumption of the most engaging forms of sentiment is so easy that the actor is not detected; and Lousteau's natural gifts had been fully developed on the stage on which he had hitherto figured.

Between the months of April and July, when Dinah expected her confinement, she discovered why it was that Lousteau had not triumphed over poverty; he was idle and had no power of will. The brain, to be sure, must obey its own laws; it recognizes neither the exigencies of life nor the voice of honor; a man cannot write a great book because a woman is dying, or to pay a discreditable debt, or to bring up a family; at the same time, there is no great talent without a strong will. These twin forces are requisite for the erection of the vast edifice of personal glory. A distinguished genius keeps his brain in a productive condition, just as the knights of old kept their weapons always ready for battle. They conquer indolence, they deny themselves enervating pleasures, or indulge only to a fixed limit proportioned to their powers. This explains the life of such men as Walter Scott, Cuvier, Voltaire, Newton, Buffon, Bayle, Bossuet, Leibnitz, Lopez de Vega, Calderon, Boccaccio, Aretino, Aristotle—in short,

every man who delighted, governed, or led his contemporaries.

A man may and ought to pride himself more on his will than on his talent. Though Talent has its germ in a cultivated gift, Will means the incessant conquest of his instincts, of proclivities subdued and mortified, and difficulties of every kind heroically defeated. The abuse of smoking encouraged Lousteau's indolence. Tobacco, which can lull grief, inevitably numbs a man's energy.

Then, while the cigar deteriorated him physically, criticism as a profession morally stultified a man so easily tempted by pleasure. Criticism is as fatal to the critic as seeing two sides to a question is to a pleader. In these professions the judgment is undermined, the mind loses its lucid rectitude. The writer lives by taking sides. Thus, we may distinguish two kinds of criticism, as in painting we may distinguish art from practical dexterity. Criticism, after the pattern of most contemporary leader-writers, is the expression of judgments formed at random in a more or less witty way, just as an advocate pleads in court on the most contradictory briefs. The newspaper critic always finds a subject to work up in the book he is discussing. Done after this fashion, the business is well adapted to indolent brains, to men devoid of the sublime faculty of imagination, or, possessed of it indeed, but lacking courage to cultivate it. Every play, every book comes to their pen as a subject, making no demand on their imagination, and of which they simply write a report, seriously or in irony, according to the mood of the moment. As to an opinion, whatever it may be, French wit can always justify it, being admirably ready to defend either side of any case. And conscience counts for so little, these *bravi* have so little value for their own words, that they will loudly praise in the greenroom the work they tear to tatters in print.

Nay, men have been known to transfer their services from one paper to another without being at the pains to consider that the opinions of the new sheet must be diametrically antagonistic to those of the old. Madame de la Baudraye could smile to see Lousteau with one article on the Legitimist side

and one on the side of the new dynasty, both on the same occasion. She admired the maxim he preached:

"We are the attorneys of public opinion."

The other kind of criticism is a science. It necessitates a thorough comprehension of each work, a lucid insight into the tendencies of the age, the adoption of a system, and faith in fixed principles—that is to say, a scheme of jurisprudence, a summing-up, and a verdict. The critic is then a magistrate of ideas, the censor of his time; he fulfils a sacred function; while in the former case he is but an acrobat who turns somersaults for a living as long as he has a leg to stand on. Between Claude Vignon and Lousteau lay the gulf that divides mere dexterity from art.

Dinah, whose mind was soon freed from rust, and whose intellect was by no means narrow, had ere long taken literary measure of her idol. She saw Lousteau working up to the last minute under the most discreditable compulsion, and scamping his work, as painters say of a picture from which sound technique is absent; but she would excuse him by saying, "He is a poet!" so anxious was she to justify him in her own eyes. When she thus guessed the secret of many a writer's existence, she also guessed that Lousteau's pen could never be trusted to as a resource.

Then her love for him led her to take a step she would never have thought of for her own sake. Through her mother she tried to negotiate with her husband for an allowance, but without Étienne's knowledge; for, as she thought, it would be an offence to his delicate feelings, which must be considered. A few days before the end of July, Dinah crumpled up in her wrath the letter from her mother containing Monsieur de la Baudraye's ultimatum:

"Madame de la Baudraye cannot need an allowance in Paris when she can live in perfect luxury at her Château of Anzy: she may return."

Lousteau picked up this letter and read it.

"I will avenge you!" said he to Dinah in the ominous tone that delights a woman when her antipathies are flattered.

Five days after this Bianchon and Duriau, the famous ladies' doctor, were engaged at Lousteau's; for he, ever since little La Baudraye's reply, had been making a great display of his joy and importance over the advent of the infant. Monsieur de Clagny and Madame Piédefer—sent for in all haste—were to be the godparents, for the cautious magistrate feared lest Lousteau should commit some compromising blunder. Madame de la Baudraye gave birth to a boy that might have filled a queen with envy who hoped for an heir-presumptive.

Bianchon and Monsieur de Clagny went off to register the child at the Mayor's office as the son of Monsieur and Madame de la Baudraye, unknown to Étienne, who, on his part, rushed off to a printer's to have this circular set up:

"Madame la Baronne de la Baudraye is happily delivered of a son.

"Monsieur Etienne Lousteau has the pleasure of informing you of the fact.

"The mother and child are doing well."

Lousteau had already sent out sixty of these announcements when Monsieur de Clagny, on coming to make inquiries, happened to see the list of persons at Sancerre to whom Lousteau proposed to send this amazing notice, written below the names of the persons in Paris to whom it was already gone. The lawyer confiscated the list and the remainder of the circulars, showed them to Madame Piédefer, begging her on no account to allow Lousteau to carry on this atrocious jest, and jumped into a cab. The devoted friend then ordered from the same printer another announcement in the following words:

"Madame la Baronne de la Baudraye is happily delivered of a son.

"Monsieur le Baron de la Baudraye has the honor of informing you of the fact.

"Mother and child are doing well."

After seeing the proofs destroyed, the form of type, everything that could bear witness to the existence of the former document, Monsieur de Clagny set to work to intercept those that had been sent; in many cases he changed them at the porter's lodge, he got back thirty into his own hands, and at last, after three days of hard work, only one of the original notes existed, that, namely, sent to Nathan.

Five times had the lawyer called on the great man without finding him. By the time Monsieur de Clagny was admitted, after requesting an interview, the story of the announcement was known to all Paris. Some persons regarded it as one of those waggish calumnies, a sort of stab to which every reputation, even the most ephemeral, is exposed; others said they had read the paper and returned it to some friend of the La Baudraye family; a great many declaimed against the immorality of journalists; in short, this last remaining specimen was regarded as a curiosity. Florine, with whom Nathan was living, had shown it about, stamped in the post as paid, and addressed in Étienne's hand. So, as soon as the judge spoke of the announcement, Nathan began to smile.

"Give up that monument of recklessness and folly?" cried he. "That autograph is one of those weapons which an athlete in the circus cannot afford to lay down. That note proves that Lousteau has no heart, no taste, no dignity; that he knows nothing of the world nor of public morality; that he insults himself when he can find no one else to insult.—None but the son of a provincial citizen imported from Sancerre to become a poet, but who is only the *bravo* of some contemptible magazine, could ever have sent out such a circular letter, as you must allow, monsieur. This is a document indispensable to the archives of the age.—To-day Lousteau flatters me, to-morrow he may ask for my head.—Excuse me, I forgot you were a judge.

"I have gone through a passion for a lady, a great lady, as far superior to Madame de la Baudraye as your fine feeling, monsieur, is superior to Lousteau's vulgar retaliation; but I would have died rather than utter her name. A few months

of her airs and graces cost me a hundred thousand francs and my prospects for life; but I do not think the price too high!—And I have never murmured!—If a woman betrays the secret of her passion, it is the supreme offering of her love, but a man!—He must be a Lousteau!

"No, I would not give up that paper for a thousand crowns."

"Monsieur," said the lawyer at last, after an eloquent battle lasting half an hour, "I have called on fifteen or sixteen men of letters about this affair, and can it be that you are the only one immovable by an appeal of honor? It is not for Étienne Lousteau that I plead, but for a woman and child, both equally ignorant of the damage thus done to their fortune, their prospects, and their honor.—Who knows, monsieur, whether you might not some day be compelled to plead for some favor of justice for a friend, for some person whose honor was dearer to you than your own.—It might be remembered against you that you had been ruthless.—Can such a man as you are hesitate?" added Monsieur de Clagny.

"I only wished you to understand the extent of the sacrifice," replied Nathan, giving up the letter, as he reflected on the judge's influence and accepted this implied bargain.

When the journalist's stupid jest had been counteracted, Monsieur de Clagny went to give him a rating in the presence of Madame Piédefer; but he found Lousteau fuming with irritation.

"What I did, monsieur, I did with a purpose!" replied Étienne. "Monsieur de la Baudraye has sixty thousand francs a year, and refuses to make his wife an allowance; I wished to make him feel that the child is in my power."

"Yes, monsieur, I quite suspected it," replied the lawyer. "For that reason I readily agreed to be little Polydore's godfather, and he is registered as the son of the Baron and Baronne de la Baudraye; if you have the feelings of a father, you ought to rejoice in knowing that the child is heir to one of the finest entailed estates in France."

"And pray, sir, is the mother to die of hunger?"

"Be quite easy," said the lawyer bitterly, having dragged

from Lousteau the expression of feeling he had so long been expecting. "I will undertake to transact the matter with Monsieur de la Baudraye."

Monsieur de Clagny left the house with a chill at his heart.

Dinah, his idol, was loved for her money. Would she not, when too late, have her eyes opened?

"Poor woman!" said the lawyer, as he walked away. And this justice we will do him—for to whom should justice be done unless to a Judge?—he loved Dinah too sincerely to regard her degradation as a means of triumph one day; he was all pity and devotion; he really loved her.

The care and nursing of the infant, its cries, the quiet needed for the mother during the first few days, and the ubiquity of Madame Piédefer, were so entirely adverse to literary labors, that Lousteau moved up to the three rooms taken on the first floor for the old bigot. The journalist, obliged to go to first performances without Dinah, and living apart from her, found an indescribable charm in the use of his liberty. More than once he submitted to be taken by the arm and dragged off to some jollification; more than once he found himself at the house of a friend's mistress in the heart of bohemia. He again saw women brilliantly young and splendidly dressed, in whom economy seemed treason to their youth and power. Dinah, in spite of her striking beauty, after nursing her baby for three months, could not stand comparison with these perishable blossoms, so soon faded, but so showy as long as they live rooted in opulence.

Home life had, nevertheless, a strong attraction for Étienne. In three months the mother and daughter, with the help of the cook from Sancerre and of little Pamela, had given the apartment a quite changed appearance. The journalist found his breakfast and his dinner there served with a sort of luxury. Dinah, handsome and nicely dressed, was careful to anticipate her dear Étienne's wishes, and he felt himself the king of his home, where everything, even the baby, was subject to his selfishness. Dinah's affection was to be seen in every trifle;

Lousteau could not possibly cease the entrancing deceptions of his unreal passion.

Dinah, meanwhile, was aware of a source of ruin, both to her love and to the household, into the kind of life into which Lousteau had allowed himself to drift. At the end of ten months she weaned her baby, installed her mother in the upstairs rooms, and restored the family intimacy which indissolubly links a man and woman when the woman is loving and clever. One of the most striking circumstances in Benjamin Constant's novel, one of the explanations of Ellénore's desertion, is the want of daily—or, if you will, of nightly—intercourse between her and Adolphe. Each of the lovers has a separate home; they have both submitted to the world and saved appearances. Ellénore, repeatedly left to herself, is compelled to vast labors of affection to expel the thoughts of release which captivate Adolphe when absent. The constant exchange of glances and thoughts in domestic life gives a woman such power that a man needs stronger reasons for desertion than she will ever give him so long as she loves him.

This was an entirely new phase both to Étienne and to Dinah. Dinah intended to be indispensable; she wanted to infuse fresh energy into this man, whose weakness smiled upon her, for she thought it a security. She found him subjects, sketched the treatment, and at a pinch, would write whole chapters. She revived the vitality of this dying talent by transfusing fresh blood into his veins; she supplied him with ideas and opinions. In short, she produced two books which were a success. More than once she saved Lousteau's self-esteem by dictating, correcting, or finishing his articles when he was in despair at his own lack of ideas. The secret of this collaboration was strictly preserved; Madame Piédefer knew nothing of it.

This mental galvanism was rewarded by improved pay, enabling them to live comfortably till the end of 1838. Lousteau became used to seeing Dinah do his work, and he paid her—as the French people say in their vigorous lingo—in "monkey money," nothing for her pains. This expenditure

in self-sacrifice becomes a treasure which generous souls prize, and the more she gave the more she loved Lousteau; the time soon came when Dinah felt that it would be too bitter a grief ever to give him up.

But then another child was coming, and this year was a terrible trial. In spite of the precautions of the two women, Étienne contracted debts; he worked himself to death to pay them off while Dinah was laid up; and, knowing him as she did, she thought him heroic. But after this effort, appalled at having two women, two children, and two maids on his hands, he was incapable of the struggle to maintain a family by his pen when he had failed to maintain even himself. So he let things take their chance. Then the ruthless speculator exaggerated the farce of love-making at home to secure greater liberty abroad.

Dinah proudly endured the burden of life without support. The one idea, "He loves me!" gave her superhuman strength. She worked as hard as the most energetic spirits of our time. At the risk of her beauty and health, Didine was to Lousteau what Mademoiselle Delachaux was to Gardane, in Diderot's noble and true tale. But while sacrificing herself, she committed the magnanimous blunder of sacrificing dress. She had her gowns dyed, and wore nothing but black. She stank of black, as Malaga said, making fun mercilessly of Lousteau.

By the end of 1839, Étienne, following the example of Louis XV., had, by dint of gradual capitulations of conscience, come to the point of establishing a distinction between his own money and the housekeeping money, just as Louis XV. drew the line between his privy purse and the public moneys. He deceived Dinah as to his earnings. On discovering this baseness, Madame de la Baudraye went through fearful tortures of jealousy. She wanted to live two lives—the life of the world and the life of a literary woman; she accompanied Lousteau to every first-night performance, and could detect in him many impulses of wounded vanity, for her black attire rubbed off, as it were, on him, clouding his brow, and sometimes leading him to be quite brutal. He was really the

woman of the two; and he had all a woman's exacting perversity; he would reproach Dinah for the dowdiness of her appearance, even while benefiting by the sacrifice, which to a mistress is so cruel—exactly like a woman who, after sending a man through a gutter to save her honor, tells him she "cannot bear dirt!" when he comes out.

Dinah then found herself obliged to gather up the rather loose reins of power by which a clever woman drives a man devoid of will. But in so doing she could not fail to lose much of her moral lustre. Such suspicions as she betrayed drag a woman into quarrels which lead to disrespect, because she herself comes down from the high level on which she had at first placed herself. Next she made some concessions; Lousteau was allowed to entertain several of his friends—Nathan, Bixiou, Blondet, Finot—whose manners, language, and intercourse were depraving. They tried to convince Madame de la Baudraye that her principles and aversions were a survival of provincial prudishness; and they preached the creed of woman's superiority.

Before long, her jealousy put weapons into Lousteau's hands. During the carnival of 1840, she disguised herself to go to the balls at the Opera-house, and to suppers where she met courtesans, in order to keep an eye on all Étienne's amusements.

On the day of Mid-Lent—or rather, at eight on the morning after—Dinah came home from the ball in her fancy dress to go to bed. She had gone to spy on Lousteau, who, believing her to be ill, had engaged himself for that evening to Fanny Beaupré. The journalist, warned by a friend, had behaved so as to deceive the poor woman, only too ready to be deceived.

As she stepped out of the hired cab, Dinah met Monsieur de la Baudraye, to whom the porter pointed her out. The little old man took his wife by the arm, saying, in an icy tone:

"So this is you, madame!"

This sudden advent of conjugal authority, before which she felt herself so small, and, above all, these words, almost froze the heart of the unhappy woman caught in the costume of a

débardeur. To escape Étienne's eye the more effectually, she had chosen a dress he was not likely to detect her in. She took advantage of the mask she still had on to escape without replying, changed her dress, and went up to her mother's rooms, where she found her husband waiting for her. In spite of her assumed dignity, she blushed in the old man's presence.

"What do you want of me, monsieur?" she asked. "Are we not separated forever?"

"Actually, yes," said Monsieur de la Baudraye. "Legally, no."

Madame Piédefer was telegraphing signals to her daughter, which Dinah presently observed and understood.

"Nothing could have brought you here but your own interests," she said, in a bitter tone.

"*Our* interests," said the little man coldly, "for we have two children.—Your Uncle Silas Piédefer is dead, at New York, where, after having made and lost several fortunes in various parts of the world, he has finally left some seven or eight hundred thousand francs—they say twelve—but there is stock-in-trade to be sold. I am the chief in our common interests, and act for you."

"Oh!" cried Dinah, "in everything that relates to business, I trust no one but Monsieur de Clagny. He knows the law, come to terms with him; what he does, will be done right."

"I have no occasion for Monsieur de Clagny," answered Monsieur de la Baudraye, "to take my children from you——"

"Your children!" exclaimed Dinah. "Your children, to whom you have not sent a sou! *Your* children!" She burst into a loud shout of laughter; but Monsieur de la Baudraye's unmoved coolness threw ice on the explosion.

"Your mother has just brought them to show me," he went on. "They are charming boys. I do not intend to part from them. I shall take them to our house at Anzy, if it were only to save them from seeing their mother disguised like a——"

"Silence!" said Madame de la Baudraye imperatively. "What do you want of me that brought you here?"

"A power of attorney to receive our uncle Silas' property."

Dinah took a pen, wrote two lines to Monsieur de Clagny, and desired her husband to call again in the afternoon.

At five o'clock, Monsieur de Clagny—who had been promoted to the post of Attorney-General—enlightened Madame de la Baudraye as to her position; still, he undertook to arrange everything by a bargain with the old fellow, whose visit had been prompted by avarice alone. Monsieur de la Baudraye, to whom his wife's power of attorney was indispensable to enable him to deal with the business as he wished, purchased it by certain concessions. In the first place, he undertook to allow her ten thousand francs a year so long as she found it convenient—so the document was worded—to reside in Paris; the children, each on attaining the age of six, were to be placed in Monsieur de la Baudraye's keeping. Finally, the lawyer extracted the payment of the allowance in advance.

Little La Baudraye, who came jauntily enough to say good-bye to his wife and *his* children, appeared in a white india-rubber overcoat. He was so firm on his feet, and so exactly like the La Baudraye of 1836, that Dinah despaired of ever burying the dreadful little dwarf. From the garden, where he was smoking a cigar, the journalist could watch Monsieur de la Baudraye for so long as it took the little reptile to cross the forecourt, but that was enough for Lousteau; it was plain to him that the little man had intended to wreck every hope of his dying that his wife might have conceived.

This short scene made a considerable change in the writer's secret scheming. As he smoked a second cigar, he seriously reviewed the position.

His life with Madame de la Baudraye had hitherto cost him quite as much as it had cost her. To use the language of business, the two sides of the account balanced, and they could, if necessary, cry quits. Considering how small his income was, and how hardly he earned it, Lousteau regarded himself, morally speaking, as the creditor. It was, no doubt, a favorable moment for throwing the woman over. Tired at the

end of three years of playing a comedy which never can become a habit, he was perpetually concealing his weariness; and this fellow, who was accustomed to disguise none of his feelings, compelled himself to wear a smile at home like that of a debtor in the presence of his creditor. This compulsion was every day more intolerable.

Hitherto the immense advantages he foresaw in the future had given him strength; but when he saw Monsieur de la Baudraye embark for the United States, as briskly as if it were to go down to Rouen in a steamboat, he ceased to believe in the future.

He went in from the garden to the pretty drawing-room, where Dinah had just taken leave of her husband.

"Étienne," said Madame de la Baudraye, "do you know what my lord and master has proposed to me? In the event of my wishing to return to live at Anzy during his absence, he has left his orders, and he hopes that my mother's good advice will weigh with me, and that I shall go back there with my children."

"It is very good advice," replied Lousteau drily, knowing the passionate disclaimer that Dinah expected, and indeed begged for with her eyes.

The tone, the words, the cold look, all hit the hapless woman so hard, who lived only in her love, that two large tears trickled slowly down her cheeks, while she did not speak a word, and Lousteau only saw them when she took out her handkerchief to wipe away these two beads of anguish.

"What is it, Didine?" he asked, touched to the heart by this excessive sensibility.

"Just as I was priding myself on having won our freedom," said she—"at the cost of my fortune—by selling—what is most precious to a mother's heart—selling my children!—for he is to have them from the age of six—and I cannot see them without going to Sancerre!—and that is torture!—Ah, dear God! What have I done——?"

Lousteau knelt down by her and kissed her hands with a lavish display of coaxing and petting.

"You do not understand me," said he. "I blame myself, for I am not worth such sacrifices, dear angel. I am, in a literary sense, a quite second-rate man. If the day comes when I can no longer cut a figure at the bottom of the newspaper, the editors will let me lie, like an old shoe flung into the rubbish heap. Remember, we tight-rope dancers have no retiring pension! The State would have too many clever men on its hands if it started on such a career of beneficence. I am forty-two, and I am as idle as a marmot. I feel it—I know it"—and he took her hand—"my love can only be fatal to you.

"As you know, at two-and-twenty I lived on Florine; but what is excusable in a youth, what then seems smart and charming, is a disgrace to a man of forty. Hitherto we have shared the burden of existence, and it has not been lovely for this year and half. Out of devotion to me you wear nothing but black, and that does me no credit."—Dinah gave one of those magnanimous shrugs which are worth all the words ever spoken.—"Yes," Étienne went on, "I know you sacrifice everything to my whims, even your beauty. And I, with a heart worn out in past struggles, a soul full of dark presentiments as to the future, I cannot repay your exquisite love with an equal affection. We were very happy—without a cloud—for a long time.—Well, then, I cannot bear to see so sweet a poem end badly. Am I wrong?"

Madame de la Baudraye loved Étienne so truly, that this prudence, worthy of de Clagny, gratified her and stanched her tears.

"He loves me for myself alone!" thought she, looking at him with smiling eyes.

After four years of intimacy, this woman's love now combined every shade of affection which our powers of analysis can discern, and which modern society has created; one of the most remarkable men of our age, whose death is a recent loss to the world of letters, Beyle (Stendhal), was the first to delineate them to perfection.

Lousteau could produce in Dinah the acute agitation which

may be compared to magnetism, that upsets every power of the mind and body, and overcomes every instinct of resistance in a woman. A look from him, or his hand laid on hers, reduced her to implicit obedience. A kind word or a smile wreathed the poor woman's soul with flowers; a fond look elated, a cold look depressed her. When she walked, taking his arm and keeping step with him in the street or on the boulevard, she was so entirely absorbed in him that she lost all sense of herself. Fascinated by this fellow's wit, magnetized my his airs, his vices were but trivial defects in her eyes. She loved the puffs of cigar smoke that the wind brought into her room from the garden; she went to inhale them, and made no wry faces, hiding herself to enjoy them. She hated the publisher or the newspaper editor who refused Lousteau money on the ground of the enormous advances he had had already. She deluded herself so far as to believe that her bohemian was writing a novel, for which the payment was to come, instead of working off a debt long since incurred.

This, no doubt, is true love, and includes every mode of loving; the love of the heart and of the head—passion, caprice, and taste—to accept Beyle's definitions. Didine loved him so wholly, that in certain moments when her critical judgment, just by nature, and constantly exercised since she had lived in Paris, compelled her to read to the bottom of Lousteau's soul, sense was still too much for reason, and suggested excuses.

"And what am I?" she replied. "A woman who has put herself outside the pale. Since I have sacrificed all a woman's honor, why should not you sacrifice to me some of a man's honor? Do we not live outside the limits of social conventionality? Why not accept from me what Nathan can accept from Florine? We will square account when we part, and only death can part us—you know. My happiness is your honor, Étienne, as my constancy and your happiness are mine. If I fail to make you happy, all is at an end. If I cause you a pang, condemn me.

"Our debts are paid; we have ten thousand francs a year,

and between us we can certainly make eight thousand francs a year—I will write theatrical articles.—With fifteen hundred francs a month we shall be as rich as Rothschild.—Be quite easy. I will have some lovely dresses, and give you every day some gratified vanity, as on the first night of Nathan's play——"

"And what about your mother, who goes to Mass every day, and wants to bring a priest to the house and make you give up this way of life?"

"Every one has a pet vice. You smoke, she preaches at me, poor woman! But she takes great care of the children, she takes them out, she is absolutely devoted, and idolizes me. Would you hinder her from crying?"

"What will be thought of me?"

"But we do not live for the world!" cried she, raising Étienne and making him sit by her. "Besides, we shall be married some day—we have the risks of a sea voyage——"

"I never thought of that," said Lousteau simply; and he added to himself, "Time enough to part when little La Baudraye is safe back again."

From that day forth Étienne lived in luxury; and Dinah, on first nights, could hold her own with the best dressed women in Paris. Lousteau was so fatuous as to affect, among his friends, the attitude of a man overborne, bored to extinction, ruined by Madame de la Baudraye.

"Oh, what would I not give to the friend who would deliver me from Dinah! But no one ever can!" said he. "She loves me enough to throw herself out of the window if I told her."

The journalist was duly pitied; he would take precautions against Dinah's jealousy when he accepted an invitation. And then he was shamelessly unfaithful. Monsieur de Clagny, really in despair at seeing Dinah in such disgraceful circumstances when she might have been so rich, and in so wretched a position at the time when her original ambitions would have been fulfilled, came to warn her, to tell her—"You are betrayed," and she only replied, "I know it."

The lawyer was silenced; still he found his tongue to say one thing.

Madame de la Baudraye interrupted him when he had scarcely spoken a word.

"Do you still love me?" she asked.

"I would lose my soul for you!" he exclaimed, starting to his feet.

The hapless man's eyes flashed like torches, he trembled like a leaf, his throat was rigid, his hair thrilled to the roots; he believed he was so blessed as to be accepted as his idol's avenger, and this poor joy filled him with rapture.

"Why are you so startled?" said she, making him sit down again. "That is how I love him."

The lawyer understood this argument *ad hominem.* And there were tears in the eyes of the Judge, who had just condemned a man to death!

Lousteau's satiety, that odious conclusion of such illicit relations, had betrayed itself in a thousand little things, which are like grains of sand thrown against the panes of the little magical hut where those who love dwell and dream. These grains of sand, which grow to be pebbles, had never been discerned by Dinah till they were as big as rocks. Madame de la Baudraye had at last thoroughly understood Lousteau's character.

"He is," she had said to her mother, "a poet, defenceless against disaster, mean out of laziness, not for want of heart, and rather too prone to pleasure; in short, a great cat, whom it is impossible to hate. What would become of him without me? I hindered his marriage; he has no prospects. His talent would perish in privations."

"Oh, my Dinah!" Madame Piédefer had exclaimed, "what a hell you live in! What is the feeling that gives you strength enough to persist?"

"I will be a mother to him!" she had replied.

There are certain horrible situations in which we come to no decision till the moment when our friends discern our dishonor. We accept compromises with ourself so long as we

escape a censor who comes to play prosecutor. Monsieur de Clagny, as clumsy as a tortured man, had been torturing Dinah.

"To preserve my love I will be all that Madame de Pompadour was to perserve her power," said she to herself when Monsieur de Clagny had left her. And this phrase sufficiently proves that her love was becoming a burden to her, and would presently be a toil rather than a pleasure.

The part now assumed by Dinah was horribly painful, and Lousteau made it no easier to play. When he wanted to go out after dinner he would perform the tenderest little farces of affection, and address Dinah in words full of devotion; he would take her by the chain, and when he had bruised her with it, even while he hurt her, the lordly ingrate would say, "Did I wound you?"

These false caresses and deceptions had degrading consequences for Dinah, who believed in a revival of his love. The mother, alas, gave way to the mistress with shameful readiness. She felt herself a mere plaything in the man's hands, and at last she confessed to herself:

"Well, then, I will be his plaything!" finding joy in it—the rapture of damnation.

When this woman, of a really manly spirit, pictured herself as living in solitude, she felt her courage fail. She preferred the anticipated and inevitable miseries of this fierce intimacy to the absence of the joys, which were all the more exquisite because they arose from the midst of remorse, of terrible struggles with herself, of a *No* persuaded to be *Yes*. At every moment she seemed to come across the pool of bitter water found in a desert, and drunk with greater relish than the traveler would find in sipping the finest wines at a prince's table.

When Dinah wondered to herself at midnight:

"Will he come home, or will he not?" she was not alive again till she heard the familiar sound of Lousteau's boots, and his well-known ring at the bell.

She would often try to restrain him by giving him pleasure;

she would hope to be a match for her rivals, and leave them no hold on that satiated heart. How many times a day would she rehearse the tragedy of *Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné,* saying to herself, "To-morrow we part." And how often would a word, a look, a kiss full of apparently artless feeling, bring her back to the depths of her love!

It was terrible. More than once had she meditated suicide as she paced the little town garden where a few pale flowers bloomed. In fact, she had not yet exhausted the vast treasure of devotion and love which a loving woman bears in her heart.

The romance of *Adolphe* was her Bible, her study, for above all else she would not be an Ellénore. She allowed herself no tears, she avoided all the bitterness so cleverly described by the critic to whom we owe an analysis of this striking work; whose comments indeed seemed to Dinah almost superior to the book. And she read again and again this fine essay by the only real critic who has written in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* an article now printed at the beginning of the new edition of *Adolphe.*

"No," she would say to herself, as she repeated the author's fateful words, "no, I will not 'give my requests the form of an order,' I will not 'fly to tears as a means of revenge,' I will not 'condemn the things I once approved without reservation,' I will not 'dog his footsteps with a prying eye'; if he plays truant, he shall not on his return 'see a scornful lip, whose kiss is an unanswerable command.' No, 'my silence shall not be a reproach nor my first word a quarrel.'—I will not be like every other woman!" she went on, laying on her table the little yellow paper volume which had already attracted Lousteau's remark, "What! are you studying *Adolphe?*"—"If for one day only he should recognize my merits and say, 'That victim never uttered a cry!'—it will be all I ask. And besides, the others only have him for an hour; I have him for life!"

Thinking himself justified by his private tribunal in punishing his wife, Monsieur de la Baudraye robbed her to

achieve his cherished enterprise of reclaiming three thousand acres of moorland, to which he had devoted himself ever since 1836, living like a mouse. He manipulated the property left by Monsieur Silas Piédefer so ingeniously, that he contrived to reduce the proved value to eight hundred thousand francs, while pocketing twelve hundred thousand. He did not announce his return; but while his wife was enduring unspeakable woes, he was building farms, digging trenches, and ploughing rough ground with a courage that ranked him among the most remarkable agriculturists of the province.

The four hundred thousand francs he had filched from his wife were spent in three years on this undertaking, and the estate of Anzy was expected to return seventy-two thousand francs a year of net profits after the taxes were paid. The eight hundred thousand he invested at four and a half per cent in the funds, buying at eighty francs, at the time of the financial crisis brought about by the Ministry of the First of March, as it was called. By thus securing to his wife an income of forty-eight thousand francs he considered himself no longer in her debt. Could he not restore the odd twelve hundred thousand as soon as the four and a half per cents had risen above a hundred? He was now the greatest man in Sancerre, with the exception of one—the richest proprietor in France—whose rival he considered himself. He saw himself with an income of a hundred and forty thousand francs, of which ninety thousand formed the revenue from the lands he had entailed. Having calculated that besides this net income he paid ten thousand francs in taxes, three thousand in working expenses, ten thousand to his wife, and twelve hundred to his mother-in-law, he would say, in the literary circles of Sancerre:

"I am reputed miserly, and said to spend nothing; but my outlay amounts to twenty-six thousand five hundred francs a year. And I have still to pay for the education of my two children! I daresay it is not a pleasing fact to the Milauds of Nevers, but the second house of La Baudraye may yet have as noble a career as the first.—I shall most likely go to Paris

and petition the King of the French to grant me the title of Count—Monsieur Roy is a Count—and my wife would be pleased to be Madame la Comtesse."

And this was said with such splendid coolness that no one would have dared to laugh at the little man. Only Monsieur Boirouge, the Presiding Judge, remarked:

"In your place, I should not be happy unless I had a daughter."

"Well, I shall go to Paris before long——" said the Baron.

In the early part 1842 Madame de la Baudraye, feeling that she was to Lousteau no more than a reserve in the background, had again sacrificed herself absolutely to secure his comfort; she had resumed her black raiment, but now it was in sign of mourning, for her pleasure was turning to remorse. She was too often put to shame not to feel the weight of the chain, and her mother found her sunk in those moods of meditation into which visions of the future cast unhappy souls in a sort of torpor.

Madame Piédefer, by the advice of her spiritual director, was on the watch for the moment of exhaustion, which the priest told her would inevitably supervene, and then she pleaded in behalf of the children. She restricted herself to urging that Dinah and Lousteau should live apart, not asking her to give him up. In real life these violent situations are not closed as they are in books, by death or cleverly contrived catastrophes; they end far less poetically—in disgust, in the blighting of every flower of the soul, in the commonplace of habit, and very often too in another passion, which robs a wife of the interest which is traditionally ascribed to women. So, when common sense, the law of social proprieties, family interest—all the mixed elements which, since the Restoration, have been dignified by the name of Public Morals, out of sheer aversion to the name of the Catholic religion—where this is seconded by a sense of insults a little too offensive; when the fatigue of constant self-sacrifice has almost reached the point of exhaustion; and when, under these circumstances, a too cruel blow—one of those mean acts which

a man never lets a woman know of unless he believes himself to be her assured master—puts the crowning touch to her revulsion and disenchantment, the moment has come for the intervention of the friend who undertakes the cure. Madame Piédefer had no great difficulty now in removing the film from her daughter's eyes.

She sent for Monsieur de Clagny, who completed the work by assuring Madame de la Baudraye that if she would give up Étienne, her husband would allow her to keep the children and to live in Paris, and would restore her to the command of her own fortune.

"And what a life you are leading!" said he. "With care and judgment, and the support of some pious and charitable persons, you may have a salon and conquer a position. Paris is not Sancerre."

Dinah left it to Monsieur de Clagny to negotiate a reconciliation with the old man.

Monsieur de la Baudraye had sold his wine well, he had sold his wool, he had felled his timber, and, without telling his wife, he had come to Paris to invest two hundred thousand francs in the purchase of a delightful residence in the Rue de l'Arcade, that was being sold in liquidation of an aristocratic House that was in difficulties. He had been a member of the Council for the Department since 1826, and now, paying ten thousand francs in taxes, he was doubly qualified for a peerage under the conditions of the new legislation.

Some time before the elections of 1842 he had put himself forward as candidate unless he were meanwhile called to the Upper House as Peer of France. At the same time, he asked for the title of Count, and for promotion to the higher grade of the Legion of Honor. In the matter of the elections, the Ministry approved of everything that could give strength to the dynastic nominations; now, in the event of Monsieur de la Baudraye being won over to the Government, Sancerre would be more than ever a rotten borough of royalism. Monsieur de Clagny, whose talents and modesty were more and more highly appreciated by the authorities, gave Monsieur de la

Baudraye his support; he pointed out that by raising this enterprising agriculturist to the peerage, a guarantee would be offered to such important undertakings.

Monsieur de la Baudraye, then, a Count, a Peer of France, and Commander of the Legion of Honor, was vain enough to wish to cut a figure with a wife and handsomely appointed house.—"He wanted to enjoy life," he said.

He therefore addressed a letter to his wife, dictated by Monsieur de Clagny, begging her to live under his roof and to furnish the house, giving play to the taste of which the evidences, he said, had charmed him at the Château d'Anzy. The newly made Count pointed out to his wife that while the interests of their property forbade his leaving Sancerre, the education of their boys required her presence in Paris. The accommodating husband desired Monsieur de Clagny to place sixty thousand francs at the disposal of Madame la Comtesse for the interior decoration of their mansion, requesting that she would have a marble tablet inserted over the gateway with the inscription: *Hôtel de la Baudraye.*

He then accounted to his wife for the money derived from the estate of Silas Piédefer, told her of the investment at four and a half per cent of the eight hundred thousand francs he had brought from New York, and allowed her that income for her expenses, including the education of the children. As he would be compelled to stay in Paris during some part of the session of the House of Peers, he requested his wife to reserve for him a little suite of rooms in an *entresol* over the kitchens.

"Bless me! why, he is growing young again—a gentleman! —a magnifico!—What will he become next? It is quite alarming," said Madame de la Baudraye.

"He now fulfills all your wishes at the age of twenty," replied the lawyer.

The comparison of her future prospects with her present position was unendurable to Dinah. Only the day before, Anna de Fontaine had turned her head away in order to avoid seeing her bosom friend at the Chamarolles' school.

"I am a countess," said Dinah to herself. "I shall have the peer's blue hammer-cloth on my carriage, and the leaders of the literary world in my drawing-room—and I will look at her!"—And it was this little triumph that told with all its weight at the moment of her rehabilitation, as the world's contempt had of old weighed on her happiness.

One fine day, in May 1842, Madame de la Baudraye paid all her little household debts and left a thousand crowns on top of the packet of receipted bills. After sending her mother and the children away to the Hôtel de la Baudraye, she awaited Lousteau, dressed ready to leave the house. When the deposed king of her heart came into dinner, she said:

"I have upset the pot, my dear. Madame de la Baudraye requests the pleasure of your company at the *Rocher de Cancale.*"

She carried off Lousteau, quite bewildered by the light and easy manners assumed by the woman who till that morning had been the slave of his least whim, for she too had been acting a farce for two months past.

"Madame de la Baudraye is figged out as if for a first night," said he—*une première,* the slang abbreviation for a first performance.

"Do not forget the respect you owe to Madame de la Baudraye," said Dinah gravely. "I do not mean to understand such a word as *figged out.*"

"Didine a rebel!" said he, putting his arm round her waist.

"There is no such person as Didine; you have killed her, my dear," she replied, releasing herself. "I am taking you to the first performance of *Madame la Comtesse de la Baudraye.*"

"It is true, then, that our insect is a peer of France?"

"The nomination is to be gazetted in this evening's *Moniteur,* as I am told by Monsieur de Clagny, who is promoted to the Court of Appeal."

"Well, it is quite right," said the journalist. "The ento-

mology of society ought to be represented in the Upper House."

"My friend, we are parting for ever," said Madame de la Baudraye, trying to control the trembling of her voice. "I have dismissed the two servants. When you go in, you will find the house in order, and no debts. I shall always feel a mother's affection for you, but in secret. Let us part calmly, without a fuss, like decent people.

"Have you had a fault to find with my conduct during the past six years?"

"None, but that you have spoiled my life and wrecked my prospects," said he in a hard tone. "You have read Benjamin Constant's book very diligently; you have even studied the last critique on it; but you have read with a woman's eyes. Though you have one of those superior intellects which would make the fortune of a poet, you have never dared to take the man's point of view.

"That book, my dear, is of both sexes.—We agreed that books were male or female, dark or fair. In *Adolphe* women see nothing but Ellénore; young men see only Adolphe; men of experience see Ellénore and Adolphe; political men see the whole of social existence. You did not think it necessary to read the soul of Adolphe—any more than your critic indeed, who saw only Ellénore. What kills that poor fellow, my dear, is that he has sacrificed his future for a woman; that he never can be what he might have been—an ambassador, a minister, a chamberlain, a poet—and rich. He gives up six years of his energy at that stage of his life when a man is ready to submit to the hardships of any apprenticeship—to a petticoat, which he outstrips in the career of ingratitude, for the woman who has thrown over her first lover is certain sooner or later to desert the second. Adolphe is, in fact, a tow-haired German, who has not spirit enough to be false to Ellénore. There are Adolphes who spare their Ellénores all ignominious quarreling and reproaches, who say to themselves, 'I will not talk of what I have sacrificed; I will not for ever be showing the stump of my wrist to that incarnate selfishness I have made my

queen,' as Ramorny does in *The Fair Maid of Perth.* But men like that, my dear, get cast aside.

"Adolphe is a man of birth, an aristocratic nature, who wants to get back into the highroad to honors and recover his social birthright, his blighted position.—You, at this moment, are playing both parts. You are suffering from the pangs of having lost your position, and think yourself justified in throwing over a hapless lover whose misfortune it has been that he fancied you so far superior as to understand that, though a man's heart ought to be true, his sex may be allowed to indulge its caprices."

"And do you suppose that I shall not make it my business to restore to you all you have lost by me? Be quite easy," said Madame de la Baudraye, astounded by this attack. "Your Ellénore is not dying; and if God gives her life, if you amend your ways, if you give up courtesans and actresses, we will find you a better match than a Félicie Cardot."

The two lovers were sullen. Lousteau affected dejection, he aimed at appearing hard and cold; while Dinah, really distressed, listened to the reproaches of her heart.

"Why," said Lousteau presently, "why not end as we ought to have begun—hide our love from all eyes, and see each other in secret?"

"Never!" cried the new-made Countess, with an icy look. "Do you not comprehend that we are, after all, but finite creatures? Our feelings seem infinite by reason of our anticipation of heaven, but here on earth they are limited by the strength of our physical being. There are some feeble, mean natures which may receive an endless number of wounds and live on; but there are some more highly-tempered souls which snap at last under repeated blows. You have——"

"Oh! enough!" cried he. "No more copy! Your dissertation is unnecessary, since you can justify yourself by merely saying—'I have ceased to love!' "

"What!" she exclaimed in bewilderment. "Is it I who have ceased to love?"

"Certainly. You have calculated that I gave you more

trouble, more vexation than pleasure, and you desert your partner——"

"I desert!——" cried she, clasping her hands.

"Have not you yourself just said 'Never'?"

"Well, then, yes! *Never,*" she repeated vehemently.

This final *Never*, spoken in the fear of falling once more under Lousteau's influence, was interpreted by him as the death-warrant of his power, since Dinah remained insensible to his sarcastic scorn.

The journalist could not suppress a tear. He was losing a sincere and unbounded affection. He had found in Dinah the gentlest La Vallière, the most delightful Pompadour that any egoist short of a king could hope for; and, like a boy who has discovered that by dint of tormenting a cockchafer he has killed it, Lousteau shed a tear.

Madame de la Baudraye rushed out of the private room where they had been dining, paid the bill, and fled home to the Rue de l'Arcade, scolding herself and thinking herself a brute.

Dinah, who had made her house a model of comfort, now metamorphosed herself. This double metamorphosis cost thirty thousand francs more than her husband had anticipated.

The fatal accident which in 1842 deprived the House of Orleans of the heir-presumptive having necessitated a meeting of the Chambers in August of that year, little La Baudraye came to present his titles to the Upper House sooner than he had expected, and then saw what his wife had done. He was so much delighted, that he paid the thirty thousand francs without a word, just as he had formerly paid eight thousand for decorating La Baudraye.

On his return from the Luxembourg, where he had been presented according to custom by two of his peer—the Baron de Nucingen and the Marquis de Montriveau—the new Count met the old Duc de Chaulieu, a former creditor, walking along, umbrella in hand, while he himself sat perched in a low chaise

on which his coat-of-arms was resplendent, with the motto, *Deo sic patet fides et hominibus.* This contrast filled his heart with a large draught of the balm on which the middle class has been getting drunk ever since 1840.

Madame de la Baudraye was shocked to see her husband improved and looking better than on the day of his marriage. The little dwarf, full of rapturous delight, at sixty-four triumphed in the life which had so long been denied him; in the family, which his handsome cousin Milaud of Nevers had declared he would never have; and in his wife—who had asked Monsieur and Madame de Clagny to dinner to meet the curé of the parish and his two sponsors to the Chamber of Peers. He petted the children with fatuous delight.

The handsome display on the table met with his approval.

"These are the fleeces of the Berry sheep," said he, showing Monsieur de Nucingen the dish-covers surmounted by his newly-won coronet. "They are of silver, you see!"

Though consumed by melancholy, which she concealed with the determination of a really superior woman, Dinah was charming, witty, and, above all, young again in her court mourning.

"You might declare," cried La Baudraye to Monsieur de Nucingen, with a wave of his hand to his wife, "that the Countess was not yet thirty."

"Ah, ha! Matame is a voman of dirty!" replied the Baron, who was prone to time-honored remarks, which he took to be the small change of conversation.

"In every sense of the words," replied the Countess. "I am, in fact, five-and-thirty, and mean to set up a little passion——"

"Oh yes, my wife ruins me in curiosities and china images——"

"She started that mania at an early age," said the Marquis de Montriveau with a smile.

"Yes," said La Baudraye, with a cold stare at the Marquis, whom he had known at Bourges, "you know that in '25, '26, and '27, she picked a million francs' worth of treasures. Anzy is a perfect museum."

"What a cool hand!" thought Monsieur de Clagny, as he saw this little country miser quite on the level of his new position.

But misers have savings of all kinds ready for use.

On the day after the vote on the Regency had passed the Chambers, the little Count went back to Sancerre for the vintage and resumed his old habits.

In the course of that winter, the Comtesse de la Baudraye, with the support of the Attorney-General to the Court of Appeals, tried to form a little circle. Of course, she had an "at home" day, she made a selection among men of mark, receiving none but those of serious purpose and ripe years. She tried to amuse herself by going to the Opera, French and Italian. Twice a week she appeared there with her mother and Madame de Clagny, who was made by her husband to visit Dinah. Still, in spite of her cleverness, her charming manners, her fashionable stylishness, she was never really happy but with her children, on whom she lavished all her disappointed affection.

Worthy Monsieur de Clagny tried to recruit women for the Countess' circle, and he succeeded; but he was more successful among the advocates of piety than the women of fashion.

"And they bore her!" said he to himself with horror, as he saw his idol matured by grief, pale from remorse, and then, in all the splendor of recovered beauty, restored by a life of luxury and care for her boys. This devoted friend, encouraged in his efforts by her mother and by the curé, was full of expedient. Every Wednesday he introduced some celebrity from Germany, England, Italy, or Prussia to his dear Countess; he spoke of her as a quite exceptional woman to people to whom she hardly addresses two words; but she listened to them with such deep attention that they went away fully convinced of her superiority. In Paris, Dinah conquered by silence, as at Sancerre she had conquered by loquacity. Now and then, some smart saying about affairs, or sarcasm on an absurdity, betrayed a woman accustomed to deal with ideas—the woman who, four years since, had given new life to Lousteau's articles.

This phase was to the poor lawyer's hapless passion like the late season known as the Indian summer after a sunless year. He affected to be older than he was, to have the right to befriend Dinah without doing her an injury, and kept himself at a distance as though he were young, handsome, and compromising, like a man who has happiness to conceal. He tried to keep his little attentions a profound secret, and the trifling gifts which Dinah showed to every one; and he endeavored to suggest a dangerous meaning for his little services.

"He plays at passion," said the Countess, laughing. She made fun of Monsieur de Clagny to his face, and the lawyer said, "She notices me."

"I impress that poor man so deeply," said she to her mother, laughing, "that if I would say Yes, I believe he would say No."

One evening Monsieur de Clagny and his wife were taking his dear Countess home from the theatre, and she was deeply pensive. They had been to the first performance of Léon Gozlan's first play, *La Main Droite et la Main Gauche* (The Right Hand and the Left).

"What are you thinking about?" asked the lawyer, alarmed at his idol's dejection.

This deep and persistent melancholy, though disguised by the Countess, was a perilous malady for which Monsieur de Clagny knew no remedy; for true love is often clumsy, especially when it is not reciprocated. True love takes its expression from the character. Now, this good man loved after the fashion of Alceste, when Madame de la Baudraye wanted to be loved after the manner of Philinte. The meaner side of love can never get on with the Misanthrope's loyalty. Thus, Dinah had taken care never to open her heart to this man. How could she confess to him that she sometimes regretted the slough she had left?

She felt a void in this fashionable life; she had no one for whom to dress, or whom to tell of her successes and triumphs. Sometimes the memory of her wretchedness came to her, mingled with memories of consuming joys. She would hate

Lousteau for not taking any pains to follow her; she would have liked to get tender or furious letters from him.

Dinah made no reply, so Monsieur de Clagny repeated the question, taking the Countess' hand and pressing it between his own with devout respect.

"Will you have the right hand or the left?" said she, smiling.

"The left," said he, "for I suppose you mean the truth or a fib."

"Well, then, I saw him," she said, speaking into the lawyer's ear. "And as I saw him looking so sad, so out of heart, I said to myself, Has he a cigar? Has he any money?"

"If you wish for the truth, I can tell it you," said the lawyer. "He is living as a husband with Fanny Beaupré. You have forced me to tell you this secret; I should never have told you, for you might have suspected me perhaps of an ungenerous motive."

Madame de la Baudraye grasped his hand.

"Your husband," said she to her chaperon, "is one of the rarest souls!—Ah! Why——"

She shrank into her corner, looking out of the window, but she did not finish her sentence, of which the lawyer could guess the end: "Why had not Lousteau a little of your husband's generosity of heart?"

This information served, however, to cure Dinah of her melancholy; she threw herself into the whirl of fashion. She wished for success, and she achieved it; still, she did not make much way with women, and found it difficult to get introductions.

In the month of March, Madame Piédefer's friends the priests and Monsieur de Clagny made a fine stroke by getting Madame de la Baudraye appointed receiver of subscriptions for the great charitable work founded by Madame de Carcado. Then she was commissioned to collect from the Royal Family their donations for the benefit of the sufferers from the earthquake at Guadeloupe. The Marquise d'Espard, to whom Monsieur de Canalis read the list of ladies thus appointed, one evening at the Opera, said, on hearing that of the Countess:

"I have lived a long time in the world, and I can remember nothing finer than the manœuvres undertaken for the rehabilitation of Madame de la Baudraye."

In the early spring, which, by some whim of our planets, smiled on Paris in the first week of March in 1843, making the Champs-Élysées green and leafy before Longchamp, Fanny Beaupré's attaché had seen Madame de la Baudraye several times without being seen by her. More than once he was stung to the heart by one of those promptings of jealousy and envy familiar to those who are born and bred provincials, when he beheld his former mistress comfortably ensconced in a handsome carriage, well dressed, with dreamy eyes, and his two little boys, one at each window. He accused himself with all the more virulence because he was waging war with the sharpest poverty of all—poverty unconfessed. Like all essentially light and frivolous natures, he cherished the singular point of honor which consists in never derogating in the eyes of one's own little public, which makes men on the Bourse commit crimes to escape expulsion from the temple of the goddess Per-cent, and has given some criminals courage enough to perform acts of virtue.

Lousteau dined and breakfasted and smoked as if he were a rich man. Not for an inheritance would he have bought any but the dearest cigars, for himself as well as for the playwright or author with whom he went into the shop. The journalist took his walks abroad in patent leather boots; but he was constantly afraid of an execution on goods which, to use the bailiff's slang, had already received the last sacrament. Fanny Beaupré had nothing left to pawn, and her salary was pledged to pay her debts. After exhausting every possible advance of pay from newspapers, magazines, and publishers, Étienne knew not of what ink he could churn gold. Gambling-houses, so ruthlessly suppressed, could no longer, as of old, cash I O U's drawn over the green table by beggary in despair. In short, the journalist was reduced to such extremity that he had just borrowed a hundred francs of the poorest of his

friends, Bixiou, from whom he had never yet asked for a franc. What distressed Lousteau was not the fact of owing five thousand francs, but seeing himself bereft of his elegance, and of the furniture purchased at the cost of so many privations, and added to by Madame de la Baudraye.

On April the 3rd, a yellow poster, torn down by the porter after being displayed on the wall, announced the sale of a handsome suite of furniture on the following Saturday, the day fixed for sales under legal authority. Lousteau was taking a walk, smoking cigars, and seeking ideas—for, in Paris, ideas are in the air, they smile on you from a street corner, they splash up with a spurt of mud from under the wheels of a cab! Thus loafing, he had been seeking ideas for articles, and subjects for novels for a month past, and had found nothing but friends who carried him off to dinner or to the play, and who intoxicated his woes, telling him that champagne would inspire him.

"Beware," said the virulent Bixiou one night, the man who would at the same moment give a comrade a hundred francs and stab him to the heart with a sarcasm; "if you go to sleep drunk every night, one day you will wake up mad."

On the day before, the Friday, the unhappy wretch, although he was accustomed to poverty, felt like a man condemned to death. Of old he would have said:

"Well, the furniture is very old! I will buy new."

But he was incapable now of literary legerdemain. Publishers, undermined by piracy, paid badly; the newspapers made close bargains with hard-driven writers, as the Opera managers did with tenors that sang flat.

He walked on, his eye on the crowd, though seeing nothing, a cigar in his mouth, and his hands in his pockets, every feature of his face twitching, and an affected smile on his lips. Then he saw Madame de la Baudraye go by in a carriage; she was going to the Boulevard by the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin to drive in the Bois.

"There is nothing else left!" said he to himself, and he went home to smarten himself up.

That evening, at seven, he arrived in a hackney cab at Madame de la Baudraye's door, and begged the porter to send a note up to the Countess—a few lines, as follows:

"Would Madame la Comtesse do Monsieur Lousteau the favor of receiving him for a moment, and at once?"

This note was sealed with a seal which as lovers they had both used. Madame de la Baudraye had had the word *Parce que* engraved on a genuine Oriental carnelian—a potent word —a woman's word—the word that accounts for everything, even for the Creation.

The Countess had just finished dressing to go to the Opera; Friday was her night in turn for her box. At the sight of this seal she turned pale.

"I will come," she said, tucking the note into her dress.

She was firm enough to conceal her agitation, and begged her mother to see the children put to bed. She then sent for Lousteau, and received him in a boudoir, next to the great drawing-room, with open doors. She was going to a ball after the Opera, and was wearing a beautiful dress of brocade in stripes alternately plain and flowered with pale blue. Her gloves, trimmed with tassels, showed off her beautiful white arms. She was shimmering with lace and all the dainty trifles required by fashion. Her hair, dressed *à la Sévigné,* gave her a look of elegance; a necklace of pearls lay on her bosom like bubbles on snow.

"What is the matter, monsieur?" said the Countess, putting out her foot from below her skirt to rest it on a velvet cushion. "I thought, I hoped, I was quite forgotten."

"If I should reply *Never,* you would refuse to believe me," said Lousteau, who remained standing, or walked about the room, chewing the flowers he plucked from the flower-stands full of plants that scented the room.

For a moment silence reigned. Madame de la Baudraye, studying Lousteau, saw that he was dressed as the most fastidious dandy might have been.

"You are the only person in the world who can help me, or hold out a plank to me—for I am drowning, and have already swallowed more than one mouthful——" said he, standing still in front of Dinah, and seeming to yield to an overpowering impulse. "Since you see me here, it is because my affairs are going to the devil."

"That is enough," said she; "I understand."

There was another pause, during which Lousteau turned away, took out his handkerchief, and seemed to wipe away a tear.

"How much do you want, Étienne," she went on in motherly tones. "We are at this moment old comrades; speak to me as you would to—to Bixiou."

"To save my furniture from vanishing into thin air to-morrow morning at the auction mart, eighteen hundred francs! To repay my friends, as much again! Three quarters' rent to the landlord—whom you know.—My 'uncle' wants five hundred francs——"

"And you?—to live on?"

"Oh! I have my pen——"

"It is heavier to lift than any one could believe who reads your articles," said she, with a subtle smile.—"I have not such a sum as you need, but come to-morrow at eight; the bailiff will surely wait till nine, especially if you bring him away to pay him."

She must, she felt, dismiss Lousteau, who affected to be unable to look at her; she herself felt such pity as might cut every social Gordian knot.

"Thank you," she added, rising and offering her hand to Lousteau. "Your confidence has done me good! It is long indeed since my heart has known such joy——"

Lousteau took her hand and pressed it tenderly to his heart.

"A drop of water in the desert—and sent by the hand of an angel! God always does things handsomely!"

He spoke half in jest and half pathetically; but, believe me, as a piece of acting it was as fine as Talma's in his famous

part of *Leicester,* which was played throughout with touches of this kind. Dinah felt his heart beating through his coat; it was throbbing with satisfaction, for the journalist had had a narrow escape from the hulks of justice; but it also beat with a very natural fire at seeing Dinah rejuvenescent and restored by wealth.

Madame de la Baudraye, stealing an examining glance at Étienne, saw that his expression was in harmony with the flowers of love, which, as she thought, had blossomed again in that throbbing heart; she tried to look once into the eyes of the man she had loved so well, but the seething blood rushed through her veins and mounted to her brain. Their eyes met with the same fiery glow as had encouraged Lousteau on the Quay by the Loire to crumple Dinah's muslin gown. The Bohemian put his arm round her waist, she yielded, and their cheeks were touching.

"Here comes my mother, hide!" cried Dinah in alarm. And she hurried forward to intercept Madame Piédefer.

"Mamma," said she—this word was to the stern old lady a coaxing expression which never failed of its effect—"will you do me a great favor? Take the carriage and go yourself to my banker, Monsieur Mongenod, with a note I will give you, and bring back six thousand francs. Come, come—it is an act of charity; come into my room."

And she dragged away her mother, who seemed very anxious to see who it was that her daughter had been talking with in the boudoir.

Two days afterwards, Madame Piédefer held a conference with the curé of the parish. After listening to the lamentations of the old mother, who was in despair, the priest said very gravely:

"Any moral regeneration which is not based on a strong religious sentiment, and carried out in the bosom of the Church, is built on sand.—The many means of grace enjoined by the Catholic religion, small as they are, and not understood, are so many dams necessary to restrain the violence of evil promptings. Persuade your daughter to perform all her religious duties, and we shall save her yet."

Within ten days of this meeting the Hôtel de la Baudraye was shut up. The Countess, the children, and her mother, in short, the whole household, including a tutor, had gone away to Sancerre, where Dinah intended to spend the summer. She was everything that was nice to the Count, people said.

And so the Muse of Sancerre had simply come back to family and married life; but certain evil tongues declared that she had been compelled to come back, for that the little peer's wishes would no doubt be fulfilled—he hoped for a little girl.

Gatien and Monsieur Gravier lavished every care, every servile attention on the handsome Countess. Gatien, who during Madame de la Baudraye's long absence had been to Paris to learn the arts of *lionnerie* or dandyism, was supposed to have a good chance of finding favor in the eyes of the disenchanted "Superior Woman." Others bet on the tutor; Madame Piédefer urged the claims of religion.

In 1844, about the middle of June, as the Comte de la Baudraye was taking a walk on the Mall at Sancerre with the two fine little boys, he met Monsieur Milaud, the Public Prosecutor, who was at Sancerre on business, and said to him:

"These are my children, cousin."

"Ah, ha! so these are our children!" replied the lawyer, with a mischievous twinkle.

PARIS, *June* 1843—*August* 1844.

